Special Designed Activities for Learning English Language through the Application of WhatsApp!

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Abstract

Students nowadays have strong passion towards the smart mobile phones with all their smart applications. The researcher believes that English language teachers can use the mobile phones, from each now and then, to increase the students' motivation. In this paper, the researcher designed a number of special activities that can be delivered to the students through the application of Whats App on the smart mobile phones. The activities are designed for intermediate level but can be modified to suit other levels and contexts.

Keywords: activities, learning English, MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning), Whats App

1. Introduction

After the vast widespread of computers all over the world, the linguists and language teachers have applied them in the field of language learning, coining the term CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). Warschauer and Healey (1998) mention the following benefits for adopting computers in language teaching: "1- multimodal practice with feedback, 2- individualization in a large class, 3- pair and small-group work on projects, either collaboratively or competitively, 4- the fun factor, 5- variety in the resources available and learning styles used, 6- exploratory learning with large amounts of language data, and 7- real-life skill building in computer use". And after the vast and overwhelming spread of mobile phones especially the smart ones, the linguists and language teachers have applied them in this field, coining the term MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning). Miangah and Nezarat (2012) confirm that "although going through language activities on mobile phones may take longer time compared to computers, the learners feel a greater sense of freedom of time and place, so that they can take the advantage of spare time to learn a second language when and where they are."

Klopfer, Squire, and Jenkins (2002) list the following advantages of using mobile devices in education: 1- portability: such devices can be carried everywhere because of their small size and weight, 2- social interactivity: exchanging data with others is so possible through mobile devices, 3- connectivity: mobile devices can be connected to other devices or a common network, and 4- individuality: activities can be designed to fit individual learner. On the other hand, many researchers, like Kukulska –Hulme and Traxler (2005) talk about the disadvantages of the mobile services such as small screen and limited data storage; and that these devices are not designed originally for educational purposes. Despite these disadvantages, the researcher believes that the occasional use of mobile phones for learning English will give its fruit and benefit to the students, especially that the mobile phones are used as supplementary teaching aid and not as fundamental and basic one. Abbasi and Hashemi (2013) found that using mobile phones by the learners of English as a foreign language has its radical effect on learning and mastering the vocabulary. Besides, Muhammed (2014) investigated the impact of mobile phones on the learners of English as a foreign language; he states that 99%of the participants in his study considered learning English language through the mobile phones so effective. Moreover, Norton (2014) points out two applications that are useful for learning English language; the two applications are *Vine* and *Fifty Three*. She lists some tips for using mobile technology with great success such as: "Don't overwhelm your class with technology, set clear learning objectives, do some research, and others".

The students at AUE are so fond of mobile phones; each one of the students has at minimum one mobile phone; they are interested to own the most up-dated smart mobile phones with latest applications in the market. The students like to hold their mobile phones all through the classes, but of course they are not allowed to do so. The researcher tries to make benefit out of this passion by adopting mobile phones in English classes. In this paper,

the researcher designed a number of special activities that can be delivered through the application of Whats App on the smart mobile phones. According to its official site, WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging application which allows people to exchange messages without paying. It is available to all brands of smart phones. Moreover, Whats App users can create groups and send to each other unlimited number of images, videos, and audio messages.

Before applying the special designed activities for learning English language through the application of Whats App, the teacher needs to check with the students that everyone has the application of Whats App on his/her mobile. Then the teacher will create a new group, providing the group subjects, who are the students, and the optional group icon; and of course the teacher will be the group admin. Before starting, it is so essential for the teacher to ask their students not to use the informal language of texting that adopts signs, symbols and letters, replacing the full English words. The designed activities suit the English language classrooms at the intermediate level. The teachers can adopt them with certain modifications to suit either the pre-intermediate level or the upper-intermediate level. And it must be taken into consideration that the students can't save these activities as the application of Whats App does not accumulate the sent and received data for long; the students will do practice the targeted skill just on spot.

2. Method

The researcher designed only fifteen intermediate-leveled activities for learning English language; these activities are like the models and templates that can evoke the English language teachers to develop hundreds and thousands of activities based on the level and interests of their students. The teachers can adopt these activities regardless of the textbook that is used inside the class. Moreover, these activities do not focus on a specific skill; rather they focus on the whole integrated essence of English language.

3. Results and Discussion: Special Designed Activities for Learning English Language through the Application of WhatsApp

Here are fifteen activities that suit to be used for learning English language, using the application of whats App:

Activity 1:

Write the names of the following emoticons and smileys.

(Emoticons and smileys to be chosen from the application of WhatsApp).

Activity 2:

Read the following situation and discuss what Huda should/ shouldn't do.

Huda is a student at MENA College of Management in Dubai; she is studying Human Resources. She doesn't have enough money to pay the fees of the coming academic semester.

Activity 3:

Add a job for each letter:

A is for accountant and for………………….

B is for bus driver and for ………………….

C is for chef and……………………………..

D is for dentist and for ……………………..

Activity 4:

Give equivalents for these proverbs from your native language.

1) All that glitters is not gold.
2) A bird in the hands is worth two in the bush.
3) Love is blind.
4) Necessity is the mother of invention.
5) When the cat's away, the mice play.

Activity 5:

Read the song which is entitled *Yellow Submarine* by *The Beatles* then answer this question: What is the theme of this song?

Yellow Submarine

In the town where I was born,

Lived a man who sailed the sea.

And he told us of his life,

In the land of submarines.

So we sailed on to the sun,

Till we found the sea of green,

And we lived beneath the waves,

In our yellow submarine.

We all live in a yellow submarine,

Yellow submarine, yellow submarine,

We all live in a yellow submarine,

Yellow submarine, yellow submarine,

And our friends are all aboard,

Many more of them live next door,

And the band begins to play.

We all live in a yellow submarine,

Yellow submarine, yellow submarine,

We all live in a yellow submarine,

Yellow submarine, yellow submarine,

As we live a life of ease,

Every one of us has all we need,

Sky of blue and sea of green,

In our yellow submarine.

We all live in a yellow submarine,

Yellow submarine, yellow submarine,

We all live in a yellow submarine,

Yellow submarine, yellow submarine.

Activity 6:

Put the letters in the correct order to make meaningful adjectives that describe feelings:

yrgna………………..

dreob…………………

editxce……………….

uovrens…………..

xdlerae……………

racsde………………

Activity 7:

General discussion: The teacher can choose any topic that the students are interested in, for example, 'Do you think that money buys happiness?', 'What is the thing that you cannot live without?', 'What is your favorite movie?' etc.

Activity 8:

Riddles

The teacher can send some riddles from each now and then; the students will have fun, will develop their

thinking, and will learn new vocabulary. The students can be encouraged to send their own riddles to their classmates. The following are some examples on riddles that can be sent:

1) Q: What starts with E, ends with E and only has one letter?

(An envelope)

2) Q: If you drop a white hat into the Red Sea, what does it become?

(Wet)

3) Q: What do you call a boomerang that won't come back?

(A stick)

These three riddles are taken from *Interesting things for ESL students* (2014).

Activity 9:

Cross out the odd word in each group:

1) inspired – saddened – encouraged – motivated

2) proposal – suggestion – order – recommendation

3) donate - contribute - give – sell

4) evaluate – assess – signal – test

5) evolve – develop – decay - progress

Activity 10:

Read your astrology/ horoscope and give feedback whether it is matching with your personality or not! (Access this link: http://www.astrology.com/)

Activity 11:

Which of these do you *say* and which do you *tell*?

--------------- a lie

--------------- yes

--------------- sorry

--------------- thank you

--------------- a joke

Activity 12:

Write a word for each definition.

1) You brother's or sister's daughter (-----------------)

2) Your wife's brother (-----------------)

3) A person you work with (-----------------)

4) Your husband's mother (-----------------)

5) Someone you know but not well (-----------------)

Activity 13:

Read the following paragraph then find ten verbs, and ten nouns; which nouns are countable and which nouns are uncountable:

Like many colors, yellow, blue, and green can have different meanings in different cultures. In my culture, yellow often means a lack of bravery. If you are afraid of something, you might be considered 'yellow'. We also have an expression 'yellow journalism'. This refers to journalism that is not always 100% true. Yellow is also used to mean slow down. Since it's the middle color on traffic lights. The color blue can represent sadness. For example, the expressions 'to feel blue' and 'to have the blues' mean to feel very sad. The color green can have several meanings in my culture. It can symbolize spring, growth, and nature. It can represent recycling and environmentalism. It can even represent money because our currency is green. Also, if you say someone is 'green' it means that they don't have very much experience. I'm not sure why we say that! (Bohlke, 2012).

Activity 14:

Write one simple sentence, one compound sentence, and one complex sentence. You are entitled to check your classmates' sentences.

Activity 15:

Enjoy the following jokes:

The teacher can send some jokes from each now and then; the students will have fun, will learn grammar and vocabulary, and will learn certain cultural insights. The students can be encouraged to send their own jokes to their classmates. The following are some examples on jokes that can be sent:

Joke (1)

Patient: Doctor, I have a pain in my eye whenever I drink tea.

Doctor: Take the spoon out of the mug before you drink.

Joke (2)

A: I have the perfect son!

B: Does he smoke?

A: No, he doesn't.

B: Does he ever come late?

A: No, he doesn't.

B: I guess you really do have the perfect son. How old is he?

A: He will be six months old next Wednesday.

These two jokes are taken from the Internet TESL Journal (2015).

4. Conclusion

MALL should not be applied all through the course and through all the classes. It should be applied when the teacher feels that his/her students are losing interest in the class, so he/she wants to motivate them to participate and to be involved in the class activities. Attewell (2004) emphasizes that mobile phones help to engage reluctant learners and help learners to remain more focused for longer periods of time. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the created group on the Whats App between the teacher and the students can be used to answer the students' questions and inquiries about the material and the course and to deliver announcements to them especially that the teacher can check that the students have received and read the messages sent to them through the single blue arrow and the two blue arrows respectively.

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