Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Through Mobile Social Networking as a Strategy of Improving the English-Speaking Skills of Young Students

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to analyze the effect of mobile-assisted Language Learning through mobile social networking as a strategy of improving the English-speaking skills of young students of 7th grade " E" of the National Institute Dario during the year 2019. To support it, and to have a reference point about this issue, some information found in two studies, one national and one international have been incorporated. The problem that this proposal address arises from the consideration of many teachers of a foreign language do not promote the use of technology as a strategy to develop activities to improve students' skills. And the lack of enough ICT rooms as one of the limiting for students practice in the classroom. The reflection on this problem motivated to elaborate this research taking as a primary objective to analyze the effect of mobile-assisted Language Learning through mobile social networking as a strategy of improving the English-speaking skills of young students of 7th grade " E" of the National Institute Dario during the year 2019.

 Key terms: *Mobile-assisted, language learning, strategy, English-speaking skills, mobile social networking*

INTRODUCTION

The adoption of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers has largely eased restrictions on where and when learners can learn as well as introduced a host of previously unavailable options in terms of modality and content https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED572193.pdf.

Moreover, since they are technological artifacts, these devices might even be qualified as extensions of our mental and physical faculties (Brey, 2000). Lyddon (2016) also, points out just as glasses improve our ability to see, smartphones and tablets have the potential to help us observe and recall things better, fill gaps in our knowledge, and enhance our ability to communicate.

As such, with the inclusion of training on how to take advantage of them in learner training programs, these powerful technologies should additionally lead to greater learner autonomy. However, the results are not always consistent, and the question is why. Thus, taking into account these points of view, it is essential to mention that technology is a vital instrument for the globalized world of today. For this reason, it should take advantage of the benefits it offers to enrich learning, In addition to, it develop the learner autonomy, in the sense of self-determination, would include not only what, where, when, and how to learn, but whether to learn at all. While it is true that students cannot choose whether to learn if they do not know how it must also be admitted that most formal language learning is compulsory and that many students might indeed opt out if given a choice. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED572193.pdf

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature on this research contains a variety of definitions that could be used to get a better comprehension of mobile-assisted language learning through mobile social networking as a strategy of improving the English-speaking skills of young students. This also, it is based on a communicative approach useful to develop students learning English speaking skills through individual autonomy.

1. Strategies using mobile-assisted language learning;

Data Access Activity; It is important for learners to be supported by their teachers when facing difficulties in learning a language, for that reason Lewis and Reinders (2010) propose some real-world activities which are conducted by them, and where the students have the opportunity to improve their English speaking skills. These activities include that each student had an iPod to go out, talk to people, find and share information and answer questions. They had this possibility to record and ask their teachers if they faced any problems. This activity seemed to be very inspiring and had a positive effect on students" motivation and ability to speak Lewis & Reinders, (cited in Derakhshan, Salehi, & Rahimzadeh, 2015)

Call in Practice Activity; One of the activities carried out using mobiles consisted of one study made by Warschuer, (cited in Derakhshan, Salehi, & Rahimzadeh, 2015) groups of ESL students were compared. There were two types of discussions, electronic and face-to-face. Very similar to Sullivan"s study, Warschuer"s study showed that students who were less active in face-to-face discussion had remarkably participated in electronic discussion and they also shared more of their ideas with their peers. Based on Warschuer´s attitude, when it comes to mobile device -based exercises, students feel more at ease in doing the exercise since they have quite a lot of time to progress and work individually to improve their language skill shortage. As a result that brings all students to come up with new ideas and share without any concerns. So these studies suggest that

synchronous communication can smoothly unload unwanted stress from students, hence they would be able to create an idea which in turn makes them become more confident and motivated.

2. Communicative Approach

Littlewood (2007) divides communicative activities into functional communication and social interaction ones. Functional communication activities are designed for learners to use whatever language they have at their disposal. Therefore, taking into account these opinions (Plocková, 2010) affirms that the success is measured primarily by their ability to cope with the given task, not by their grammatical accuracy and appropriateness of their choice of the language. Social interaction activities place emphasis also on choosing a language which is acceptable according to the particular situation. Consequently, success is measured according to both the functioning-effectiveness and correct language choice. Finally, it is essential to point out that the Communicative Approach often places the responsibility for fulfilling the tasks on the learners themselves. The teacher creates a situation and sets an activity, but his role during the activity is not direct, he can serve as a guide, advisor or observer, but the primary responsibility for coming to a conclusion lies on his students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This qualitative applied research explores the use of mobile-assisted language learning through mobile social networking as a strategy to improve the English- speaking skills of young students of a secondary school. It takes into account Crossman´s (2019) point of view, who refers that qualitative research is designed to reveal the meaning that informs the action or outcomes that are typically measured by quantitative analysis. The investigation was cross-sectional because it was carried out in a specific period, the 1sth semester of the year 2019. It was making an exploration of the actual school situation with particular emphasis on the comprehension of the technique observed with an inductive

and descriptive investigation concerning the research procedure.

The population for this research comprises two thousand and ninety-three one hundred students (between 13-17 years of age), in the seventh grade of secondary school in the National Institute Darío in San Isidro, Matagalpa. These students are distributed in four different class who attend school in four shifts, one in the morning shift, one in the afternoon shift, one in the evening shift and one in the Saturday shift. The sample for this research includes both genders: male and female who are seven students of seventh "E" and one English teacher from afternoon shift at National Institute Dario.

To carry out this research one English teacher was selected, the choice was made using purposive sampling (judgmental selection) or non-probability method through a non-random sampling. Whereas, from a 35 students group seven students were selected using probability-based methods, where the choice was in a "mechanical" procedure (convenience sampling) through random sampling, in order to get relevant information applying some interviews focused on eight questions about the use of technology.

Qualitative data was collected applying semi-structured interview and observation guide techniques, designed for one English teacher and seven students, which were processed by tabulation.

The data was analyzed putting into practice analytic tools such as thinking techniques used to simplify the coding process, theoretical comparisons and theoretical sampling. Also, it was used some exploratory sources such as observation´s guide, semi-structured interviews which consisted of open-ended questions transcripts.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The most meaningful findings of this research are summarized as the following:

1. **Which are the speaking activities carry out with the students of the 7th grade "E" of the National Institute Dario using the mobile-assisted Language Learning through mobile social networking in the classroom?**

Taking into account the interviews and guide observation outcomes presented in the analysis it could be affirmed that most of the strategies applying by the teacher using technology help students´ learning English speaking skills. In addition to most of them manifested that they felt more motivated to practice English speaking through mobile devices through mobile social networking. Therefore it could be considered that mobile assisted language learning through mobile social networking could be an excellent strategy to improve English speaking in young students due to the impact that the social networking is generating around the world and considering that most of the young learners have access to a mobile device and a social account in the network which makes easier the learning for them. However, it could observe that one of the difficulties presented using these strategies is although, most of the students have a mobile device, and some of them do not have access to the network. Nevertheless, this strategy provokes positive effects on students, because they become more self-confidence, and self-sufficient in their learning.

2. **Which are the advantages of the integration of technology of mobile-assisted Language Learning through mobile social networking as a strategy of improving the English-speaking skills of the 7th grade "E" students of the National Institute Dario?**

Taking into account the outcomes above described, it could be considered that mobile devices are faster captivating new users, especially young people; due to it provides

growing capacity, and allow more clever use. The integration of such technologies into learning of a foreign language could be beneficial to develop effective strategies of learning such as mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) through mobile social networking that could play an essential role in students' development, owing to the mobile phone is very accessible, moderately cheap and its mobility facilitates that students can practice English speaking in any place and at any time. Also, many educational applications that could be installed in the mobile phones let students develop their English language speaking and their communicative skills. Taking into account the advantages that mobile features offer such as audio, animation, interactive scenes of images and projection, learning can be manipulated in a variety of approaches that will make it more fun, exciting and fruitful for learners. Which generate a positive effect on students, because they are more engaged and enhanced with their learning, and it provokes in them more autonomy.

CONCLUSION

The Nicaraguan educational system proposes that the teacher should use different strategies to guide his students learning to get a successful knowledge. But one of the limiting founds in this research was that not all the students have access to use technology due to the lack of ICT rooms in the school. For that reason, they are considering the outcomes obtained in some interviews and observation guide, where most of the students and the teacher manifested some of the advantages of using mobile phone for learning, for instance, to develop autonomy and self-confidence on students to improve their English speaking skills. Also, students feel more engaged and enhanced with their education, because they can study in any place and at any time outside the classroom. Another advantage is that mobile devices such as phones could be excellent tools for learning because, they are cheaper than computers.

It is essential to mention that this paper could be significant for new researches based on the inclusion of technology as a strategy of learning, mainly through the use of mobile

assisted language learning as well as, to benefit the teaching process providing the teacher the use of different strategies to guide students' learning so that they can build their knowledge. Many times teachers use strategies, but do not mix them with technological resources, which is insufficient in the development of communication skills in students.

In relation to the general objective, referred to analyze the Effect of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning through Mobile Social Networking as an strategy of improving the English-speaking skills of young students of 7th grade "E" of the National Institute Dario during the year 2019, it is concluded that according to the outcomes gathered in the interview and observation guide, most of the student expressed when the teacher applies strategies using technology, they feel more motivated for learning, which generated positives effects on them, because in this way they can learn by themselves in their free time. And, the use of phones as a strategy of learning is an excellent idea, due to most of them can use it. For that reason, it requires the regular use of ICT resources and among them the mobile-assisted language learning approach to achieve optimal development in the communication skills of students.

It can be said that the objectives set out in this study were fulfilled, since if the teachers use the mobile-assisted language learning approach as a strategy to improve communication, then the development of the basic skills of the English language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) will be achieved. As well as the competencies (listening comprehension, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary) in the students.

It were identified some limitations, such as, students have not yet developed communication skills, the lack of enough ICT rooms to facilitate the use of technology in the learning process. As well as, not all the students have access to the network, and to buy their own phone to practice at their home the assignments oriented by their teacher. Not doing this, would negatively affects the achievement of oral skills that students must develop in their process of knowledge

acquisition. The awareness that teachers and students have about this approach was explored, the strategies applied by teachers in the process of learning the English language were evaluated. They want them to be used more frequently to get out of the routine and achieve more meaningful learning. But another limiting is that most of the students do not devote enough time to self-study and research. This is reflected in their low level of comprehension, limited vocabulary, and limited fluency when communicating with their classmates or with a native speaker.

By itself, the approach above does not contribute significantly to the development of skills. Because it is necessary that teachers apply a didactic instrument aimed at the students in a planned, organized and aware way by the teachers to develop the students' communication skills. However, the use of it as a strategy to improve English speaking students skills could be an excellent complement for their learning.

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