

USING SMART PHONES IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Статья посвящена рассмотрению современных электронных технологий в качестве инструментов обучения иностранным языкам.

Ключевые слова: обучение иностранным языкам, смартфон, современные технологии, изучение иностранного языка.

Nowadays young people cannot imagine their lives without technology, in particular without their smart phones. The possibilities of using smart phones are endless. Besides making calls you can store huge amount of data like photos, songs, videos, movies, books and journals, keeping yourself entertained and updated by easily accessing the Internet, checking your social accounts, e-mails and bank accounts or using all kinds of helpful applications for your needs. As language teachers we need to incorporate this modern technology into our classrooms and make use of it as smart as we can in order to facilitate language learning process of our students. Therefore, this paper introduces the benefits of using smart phones in language classrooms and suggests some useful activities that can be conducted using them.

Keywords: language teaching, smart phones, modern technology, language learning.

The 21st century is the century of technological development and young people cannot imagine their lives without it, in particular without their smart phones. People have created wonderful technological devices and gadgets which make our lives much easier, faster, better and more fun. Smart watches, voice assisted devices, GPS, tablets, iPods, 3D printers and wireless headphones are just some of the sophisticated gadgets that have been created with the help of technological development.

Just imagine what you would have to do a decade ago if you wanted to send money to your parents. Obviously, you would not be able to do so without leaving your house and going to the nearest bank branch. Today with the advancement of technology, in particular with the help of your smart phone, you are able to transfer money instantly any time of the day without even leaving your house.

One of the most useful technological advances is a smart phone the help of which have made almost everything accessible within seconds through a touch of a finger. They are irreplaceable gadgets because almost every person uses their smart phones when they wake up in the morning until they go to bed in the evening. So, how this revolutionary gadget has changed our life that everybody use them all the time without even thinking about it?

Benefits of using smart phones in language classrooms

Six hours a day. That is how much time the average teenager spent online. And this number has grown up to 9 hours a day according to Tsukayama [3]. These are 'digital natives' a generation that has grown up online and connected. How can we as language teachers make use of this revolutionary technology to support and facilitate language learning process of our students?

There are many studies which have shown that language teaching can benefit from this technology in a number of ways.

The use of smart phones can extend far beyond the classroom where it is more convenient to the student allowing for more freedom and time [1, p. 120].

The students' easy access to the Internet through their phones enables them to make use of learning resources which had not been within reach in the past [1, p. 120].

The study conducted by Darmi and Albion [2, p. 99] asserted that the integration of smart phones in foreign language teaching has a significant role in improving language skills and related language areas.

Learners are used to working with smart phones, often more than with computers. Thornton and Houser [5, p. 161] report in their study that young Japanese learners prefer to use smart phones for many activities, from emailing to reading books.

Teachers have considered that apps for smart phones are the most engaging methods to teach difficult subjects like math and science. For example: the free NASA app provides with videos, images, and interactive displays which bring space to life in a way that a teacher never could" [4].

These findings present us with the challenge to re-design the way we teach and learn a foreign language and make use of the modern technology in our classrooms.

Smart phones have a variety of built-in functions such as note taking, photo capturing, audio and video playback, recording and editing, e-mail writing, text messaging, web browsing and so on.

Moreover students can also install the following kinds of apps on their phones for free. They are apps dedicated for social media, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, video-conferencing services like Skype, Viber or Zoom, apps for messaging and texting including Snapchat, Facebook Messenger or WeChat, video streaming players like Youtube or VLC media player and etc.

There are many benefits of using smart phones in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Some of them are:

Big and old dictionaries had already been replaced by apps on the phone which can be used anywhere and anytime. Before mobile technology, students had to bring their dictionary to the classroom and search through a word in the dictionary to understand its meaning. But now they can look words up in a dictionary app or search the Internet whenever they face with the unknown word. Looking up a word on the smart phone saves much more time compared to using a printed dictionary.

Students can read and save an endless amount of e-books, journals or scientific articles on their smart phones related to their study or assignment which are not available for use in their local or university library. And they can read them anytime and anywhere they want.

EFL learners can watch and listen to different songs, podcasts, programs or movies on their smart phones in order to improve their English language listening and speaking skills.

Moreover, there are numerous educational and learning apps that can be used both by teachers and students. These apps are extending the language learning process outside of the classroom, making the learning much more interactive and engaging.

EFL teachers can develop many effective communicative tasks which students can do using their smart phones. Here, five example activities are introduced that English language teachers can use with their students.

1. Making a commercial

This activity can be carried out as a team. Students are asked to make a commercial of something using their smart phones. It can be an earphone, a laptop, a book or anything they want. A teacher should allot a time limit of around 3-5 minutes for the commercial to run. Students can prepare this activity at home by making a short video with their smart phones and play the recording of the commercial in the class. They can find the information about

the advertising object from the internet using their phones. To make this activity even more interesting a teacher can pick one team as a winner based on the following conditions of their commercial:

- a. How informative was the commercial?
- b. Did all members of the team participate in doing the commercial?
- c. Is the commercial performed within the given time limit?
- d. Could the commercial explain all the necessary aspects of the item being advertised?

2. Describing a famous person

Students do this activity individually. They are asked to describe someone they follow on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok. It can be a famous actor, author, singer, entrepreneur or an artist. Or it can be anyone they follow on social media who he or she admires. They should prepare a talk about this person at home and share it with the classmates when they come to class. They should also include the reason why they chose this person to talk about, what is special about this person, how often they check his/her account, what this person mostly shares on his/her account and so on. As a follow-up activity students can do a quiz about the people who were introduced during these talks.

3. Silent storytelling This activity can be performed individually or as a group. A student is asked to make a short video of him or her doing something but without any words using his/her smart phone. Or a group of students can act out a scene where they are celebrating some kind of holiday, for example a New Year's Eve etc. In the class the rest of the students watch this video and make up a story using sentences. For example, it can be written as follows: *"After school Bold went home with some of his friends. First they ate lunch that Bold's mother prepared that morning. After that they started doing their homework together. When they were doing their English homework Bold's phone rang. And they quickly left the house. ..."* To make this task even more effective a teacher can ask students to use the right form of Simple Past or Past Continuous tenses. When all the students are finished playing their videos and made up their stories a teacher can choose the winner/s who could come up with the most interesting or unusual story.

4. Interesting house chores

This activity is a pair work. It asks a student to take pictures of house chores once he gets home after class with his phone. When in class his partner asks questions using Past Simple tense. For example: *'Did you help your mom to cook dinner?'* or using Present Simple tense. For example: *'Do you always do your homework after you finish your dinner?'* And as a pair they continue on asking and answering questions based on the photos taken by their smart phones.

5. Can you guess this person?

This activity can be performed both individually and as a group. A teacher asks about someone who is a famous or an influential person from their or from other country. He or she does that without telling out loud the name of the person to be guessed. Instead a teacher can write the name of the person on a piece of paper and hand it out straightly to the student. Students do a search on this person using their smart phones within the given time limit. When the allocated time finishes they should tell the class as much information as they could find. The rest of the class tries to guess the name of the person. Afterwards, they can have a discussion about these people as a class. This activity can be performed as a lead-in activity to the reading exercise.

Educational technology such as smart phones can not lead to an effective learning alone. Instead, it still requires someone, in this situation an EFL teacher, to guide and control students when they perform the activities with their smart phones. And of course, a teacher can allocate only certain minutes of the classroom time depending on the task to be performed to use their phones, not the whole class time. This way a smart phone used in the classroom, can be not a distraction but an effective teaching tool.

To summarize, firstly this paper discussed about the advancement of technology namely about smart phones. Furthermore, it talked about some of the benefits of using smart phones in EFL classrooms and what we as English language teachers can do with this smart technology in our classrooms to develop students' language skill. Lastly, the paper suggested some of the effective tasks that can be performed using smart phones in our classrooms.

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