TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES TOWARD MOBILE LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT: *This paper aims to study teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward mobile learning implementation in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. The study consists of 34 English language teachers, all from Saudi Arabia. The study depends on the descriptive approach to evaluate English language teachers' attitudes, and perspectives toward using smart phones in pedagogical processes. The results asserts that Saudi English language teachers have positive attitudes and perspectives toward using smart phones in pedagogical process with total mean of (3.04) out of 4. Furthermore, the findings show that the total mean of using or developing mobile learning applications is equal to (2.73) which show that the majority of Saudi English language teachers perceived themselves as undecided or proficient and more close to proficient concerning their ability to use smart phones and mobile applications for language teaching.*

KEYWORDS: Teachers' Attitudes, Mobile Learning, Secondary Schools, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, using more English language within Saudi communities is widely spread according to the impact of globalization, media and its modern life, say Mahboob and Elyas (2014, p.128). English language is known to be a foreign language in Saudi Arabia (EFL). Hence, Saudis learn English in formal and private institutions because they do not have chances for language exposures out of the educational campuses. Therefore, it is a process of learning new phonological and syntactical patterns in an age close to puberty because most of the Saudis are not acquiring EFL aspects in their early ages.

Technology in today's modern society is constantly evolving at a rapid pace. Tech savvy consumers are demanding access to information and instantaneous communication on portable devices to keep up with a growing mobile society. Users are performing various tasks on their mobile devices including those related to work, play, communication, and socialization. This extreme growth in the capabilities of mobile technology in combination with increasing affordability has led to the acknowledgement of a ubiquitous learning tool by various researchers and educators in both K-12 and higher education. Though since its inception much work has been done to define mobile learning and discuss specific challenges of pedagogy, the majority of primary studies have flourished in the last five years due to the transformation of mobile learning from a subsidiary of e-learning (i.e. mobile e-learning) to its own field (Traxler, 2009). As non-traditional methods of education become more prevalent and thus, informal and flexible learning environments become necessary for students in an ever-connected society, research of m-learning will play a significant role in determining if institutions can support 21st century needs (Fetaji, 2008).

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) requires effective solutions with regard to the innovative methods and styles and to take advantage of the technical learning environments; learning in a variety situations and not just the classroom environment. M-Learn provides innovative methods of content delivery and to overcome the problems of traditional education by diversifying learning environments, enabling the learner to benefit more from the content, as it provides the seamless learning environment where one of its most important characteristics is the continuity of learning during the change of time and place. The Mobile Learning links education with community using the common means of communication, therefore, supports the Social Constructivist Theory. Many variables affect learning through M-learn techniques, including technical variables, such as the mobile device screen size and lighting, resolution, built in services as Voice Recognition, networks support and other numerous services; in addition to the variables related to the content including sound, image, text, video, notes, applications and so on.

Through what has been presented the research problem is determined in identifying teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward mobile learning implementation in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia.

The Significance of study

Investigating teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward mobile learning implementation is beneficial to pave a clear path to developmental pedagogy and to supply education affiliates as well as researchers. For teachers, they can check the appropriateness of theirs and their colleagues' beliefs regarding foreign language teaching and learning based on current research. In addition, teachers can understand how to develop their pedagogical techniques through reflection on teaching using smart phones, which will in turn enhance the complex process of teaching and learning. This study seeks to promote the research into mobile learning in Saudi Arabia and it is hoped that it will encourage researchers to explore new research avenues.

The Purpose and the questions of the study

The purposes of this study are to outline teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward mobile learning implementation in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. For these purposes, the following research question is addressed to guide this study:

1. What are the teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward mobile learning implementation in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia?

2. What are the teachers' perspectives toward using/developing mobile learning applications and tools?

Procedure

Participants

The participants constitute 43 teachers teaching English in Saudi Arabia. The whole sample is selected randomly.

Research Methodology

According to the research goals and the hypothesis, the appropriate methodology for this study is using descriptive research method.

Research Instrument

An electronic questionnaire consists of 16 questions.

Research Instrument's Validity and Reliability

To check the instrument's validity, five arbitrators judged the questionnaire to determine the final form which consist of twenty-four questions that are equally divided into three main categories. On the other hand, to investigate the reliability, the researchers applied the questionnaire on five English language teachers and five students and retested them again. Then, the researchers used Person's Correlation Test as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Instrument's Validity and Reliability

Validity	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha Value)
0.73	0.89

Data Collection and Analysis

Free-online electronic questionnaire building website is used to collect the data through asking the participants to fill it in. SPSS Program is used to analyze the collected data. Table 1.2 indicates the samples:

Table 1.2 The Study's Samples

Group	Number
English Language Teachers	34

LITERATURE REVIEW

M-learn is an ingenious teaching technique by which it is possible to access information and learning resources in any place and at any time. It gives the learner freedom for ubiquitous learning and information, the prerogative of education and employment opportunities (Alotaibi, 2013). The research in M-learn field considered as one of the latest educational technology researches (Ally, 2009, p.2). Queen (as cited in Safie, 2004) thinks that mobile computing and e-learning converge in M-learn which is characterized by interactive, autonomy in the time and place and effective learning. Salem (2012) believes that M-learn is the use of small wireless devices, handheld devices such as smart phones, personal digital assistants PDAs, smart phones, and tablet PCs. M-learn is distinguished in convenience, flexibility, interaction in learning process and exceeding the limits of time and space. (Looi et al., 2009) described mobile learning as seamless learning , which is characterized by the shift from the concept of e-learning based on anytime and anywhere to the concept of education anytime and anywhere; that is supported by Dahshan and Younis (Salem , 2012). The previous statements say that education exists even if the learner changes the time and place during the learning process.

Mobile Learning can be useful in the development of these skills consistently and taking advantage of its services deployed widely, including SMS and applications of Instant Messaging (IM) to increase the effectiveness of learning by using text and context variables and methods of their presentation and organization.

The rapid development in the mobile industry with its potential technical and diverse of processor speed, memory, storage capacity, screen sizes and types, accuracy and compatibility with other devices, the large number of applications, and diversity are considered as a reason to draw the attention of educational designers to use this technology in the educational process. It provides easy readability, clarity of attractive presentation, speed production, processing efficiency, smoother to use, diversity of content delivery, access to the internet, e- transfer, share data, conversion, abundance of editing and office's production programs. The modern mobile devices vary in capabilities that can be provided in the educational field in different technical and software features, applications and flexibility. All that have led to the promotion of M-learn and flexible interaction between the learner and the learning object repository diversify educational environments, privacy and individualized instruction. Therefore draws educational designers to transform effective e-learning education into M-learn as in the institution Epocrates Modality which offers high-leveled medical educational programs (Corbiel & Valdes, 2012; Woodcock *et al*., 2012). It is so obvious that the mobile devices are widely spread in developing countries and especially in Saudi Arabia, as the latest statistical says (ITU[1] & CDSI[2]). Today, mobile devices already allow performing an endless number of functions, replicating features of many existing objects with their unique characteristics of the mobile medium as portability, personalization, contextualization and connectivity.

Based on the enormous capacity of mobile devices and its multi potential aspects, Naismith and others suggest a model for the recruitment of M-learn in some teaching styles. First, the style of strengthening the promotion and immediate response accordance with principles of behavioral theory and according to the theory of constructivism through integration in the classroom, such as simulations and games. Secondly, the style of in-context learning, such as the use of mobile in real positions or modified, as virtual museums. Thirdly, in the style of cooperative learning, such as communication, participation, the distribution of tasks and information gathering. Fourthly, in style of lifelong learning while the device is in the learner hand. Fifthly, the style of coordination and supporting education by convenient access to the sources in a timely manner (Corviel & Valdies, 2012).

Voice calling, Short Message Service (SMS), Instant Message (IM) and e-mail are known as the most common mobile phone services which are used among students according to a study of Woodcock and others (Woodcock et al., 2012). In addition, it shows that of the most commonly used programs in education are education management systems, such as libraries; educational groups; search by the browser and electronic dictionaries and office production programs. According to Dahshan and Younis (cited in Salem, 2012) the smart phones are considered as one of the Mobile Learning Devices that offer a lot of features and advantages of distance education, such as interactivity, globalization, accessibility and flexibility also they are characterized by mobility and accessibility during movement.

Alotaibi (2013), in his study about using smart phones for m-learn through educational SMS and IM, found that SMS with more than one new vocabulary has strong retention than using one new word. The following studies are all cited in (Pollara, 2011). First, Al-Fahad (2009), in his study about students' attitudes toward M-learning, shows that students found m-learning effective and widely embraced the technology, students noted portability and have positive

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[1] International Telecommunication Union. ITU is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs. www.itu.int.

[2] Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information. www.cdsi.gov.sa

attitude toward mobile learning. Secondly, Bottentuit Junior's (2008) study finds 39% had heard the term m-learning; 25% reported using a mobile device for some sort of learning; vast majority believed educational of mobile devices & would potential like to use them in the classroom; students stated that they saw m-learning in the future & access to information at any time/place was good. Furthermore, Cavus & Ibrahim (2009) study finds that students believed that the system brought greater flexibility to their learning; interest of students to use mobile phones has helped them to learn new words; students wanted the system to be used in other classes. Fourthly, Clarke et al (2008) find that 84% of students found the SMS concept worthwhile & 83% enjoyed it. Students see this as the best medium because of convenience; portable message –no computer needed – preferred method over other methods (WebCT, daily podcast, email, Moodle). Finally, Wang, et al (2009) concluded that students showed strong interest in m-learning, students uncharacteristically provided candid feedback to the instructor in a class forum, students were satisfied with activities conducted in class.

As discussed previously, Naismith et al. (2004) claim that mobile learning can relate to six different types of learning activities. However, in the studies analyzed, learning tasks were found to be behaviorist or constructivist. Thus, more research needs to be done to understand student activity in the other categories that Naismith et al. (2004) suggest.

FINDINGS

The researchers use SPSS to analyze the data according to the means and frequencies.

Saudi English language teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward the use of smart phones for language learning/teaching.

The findings of the questionnaire concerning teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward the implementation of smart phones in pedagogical process, the total mean of the section (3.04) shows that the Saudi EFL teachers have positive attitudes and perspectives toward the implementation of smart phones in pedagogical process. Saudi English language teachers held positive attitudes and perspectives toward some affordances of the use of smart phones for Saudi EFL including facilitation of learning, portability, use of multimedia, time-efficiency, possibility of connecting to the Internet, and possibility of ubiquitous learning for language learners. However, 24% of teachers disagreed that smart phones can be used for teaching English language skills (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 Saudi English language teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward the use of smart phones for language learning/teaching

|	Mean
The use of mobile phones can create interactive learning environments.	3.00
The multimedia used in mobile phones is useful for EFL learning.	3.15
Scaffolding can be provided for each learner through the use of mobile phones for language teaching.	3.18
Mobile phones can be used to teach/learn different language skills.	3.12

The use of mobile phones for language teaching/learning is cost-effective.	2.65
The use of mobile phones for language teaching/leaning is time-efficient.	3.18
Mobile phones can be connected to the Internet at any time.	2.76
Mobile phones provide learners with ubiquitous language learning opportunities.	3.03
The use of mobile phones can create interactive learning environments.	3.18
The multimedia used in mobile phones is useful for EFL learning.	3.18

Total mean is (3.04)

Saudi English language teachers' perspectives toward the use/develop mobile learning activities and applications.

As Table 1.4 illustrates, the total mean of this section is equal to (2.73) which shows that the majority of Saudi English language teachers perceived themselves as undecided or proficient and more close to proficient concerning their ability to use smart phones and mobile applications for language teaching.

Table 1.4 Saudi English language teachers' perspectives toward the use/develop mobile learning activities and applications

	Mean
I have the ability to design mobile learning activities.	2.21
I have the ability to evaluate mobile learning applications and tools..	2.47
I have the ability to use mobile phones for language teaching.	3.15
I have the ability to use mobile learning applications and tools.	3.35
I have the ability to use mobile phones for teaching practices.	3.24
My students have the ability to use mobile phones for their learning in my classes.	1.97

Total mean is (2.73)

Figure 1.1 Total Means
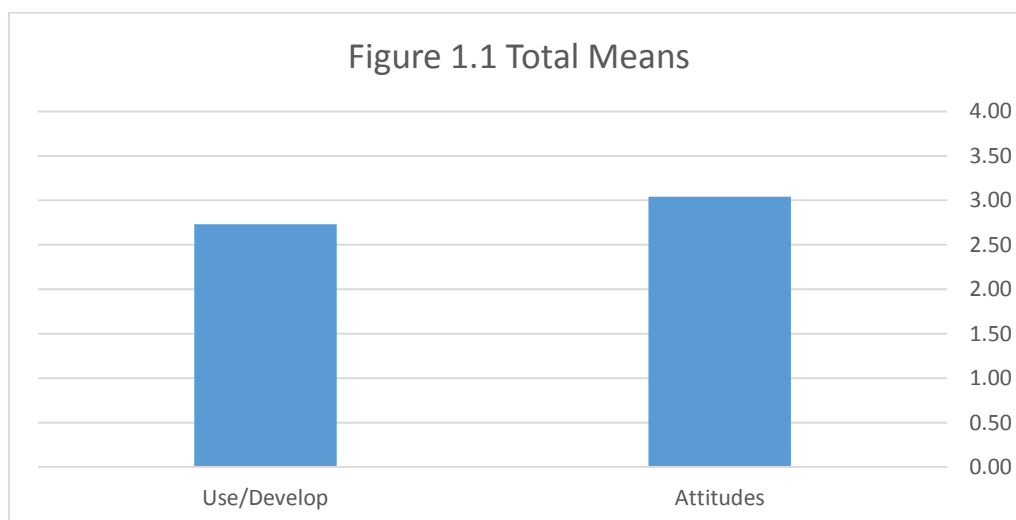
Concluding Remarks

This study was an attempt to address EFL teachers' perceptions of the implementation of smart phones in language learning in Saudi Arabia. The data obtained from questionnaire illustrated that Saudi English language teachers adopt moderately positive attitudes and perspectives on the integration and implementation of Smart phones in pedagogical process. In addition, the findings might suggest that Saudi EFL teachers are aware of possible merits and affordances of smart phones implementation for language teaching and learning. As the findings suggest, one major affordance of smart phones in education is that it enables students and teachers to be connected to the Internet in the classroom. Moreover, positive perceptions of Saudi English language teachers toward smart phones implementation in educational procedures. The results are commensurate with previous studies which showed teachers' positive attitudes toward mobile learning. Teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of smart phones in pedagogical process can be investigated in various language teaching contexts. Extreme caution should be exercised to evaluate both teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of mobile phones for language teaching and learning prior to the implementation of smart phones in educational programs. At present, it appears that smart phones has been implemented in a number of EFL contexts based on students' acceptance of the technology without taking teachers' perspectives into account. In terms of smart phones implementation in education, future research should be focused on EFL teachers' actual use of mobile technology for language teaching.

More importantly, considering the context in which smart phones is implemented in pedagogy is essential. Evaluating teachers' perspectives on the use of technology should be combined with the evaluation of the context and environment. EFL teachers and authorities are recommended to conduct research studies to examine Saudi EFL students' motivation and preparedness for the use of mobile phones for their learning. Practical workshops on using smart phones in pedagogy can be held in which teachers develop and design mobile learning activities and tasks. One effective strategy is to encourage language teachers to participate in collaborative projects on smart phone implementation in education. In these workshops, teachers can develop mobile learning activities and tasks collaboratively.

Lastly, smart phones implementation in pedagogy is an uninvestigated area of research in the Saudi EFL context. Very little is known about the suitability of the implementation of mobile learning in the Saudi EFL context. More research is required to evaluate the suitability of the implementation of mobile learning from the perspectives of language learners. Furthermore, future research should be focused on exploring EFL learners' mobile learning preparedness and skills prior to the implementation of mobile learning in the Saudi EFL context. Some experimental studies should also be conducted to investigate the perceptions of language teachers and learners toward actual practices of mobile learning. As there is a lack of research on EFL teachers' acceptance of mobile learning implementation, more research should be focused on EFL teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward the implementation of mobile learning in the future.

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