Chapter 73
The Impacts of Distance Interactivity on Learners' Achievements in Online Mobile Language Learning:
Social Software and Participatory Learning

Morteza Mellati
Islamic Azad University-Qom Branch, Iran

Marzieh Khademi
Baqer-al-Oloum University, Iran

ABSTRACT

The expansion of technological applications such as computers and mobile phones in the past three decades has impacted our life from different perspectives. Language teaching is no exception and like other fields of study, language teaching has also influenced by new language teaching sources and software. More recently, there has been a passionate debate about the usefulness of the smart-phones for educational purposes and their possible uses in English language instruction; therefore, the present study investigated the impacts of interactivity perceptions on EFL learners' achievements in Online Mobile Language Learning (OMLL) course. To conduct the present study, 68 Iranian intermediate EFL learners were chosen among which 43 participated in Online Mobile Language Learning (OMLL) course and 25 others participated in conventional language classrooms. The results of the study demonstrated that OMLL has significant effects on learners' achievements; however, there are some challenges in conducting online mobile language learning (OMLL) courses in Iranian EFL context.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has great impacts on human life from various perspectives. People communicate with each other via new technological devices such as mobile phones, social networking, texting via the internet, as well as visiting various webs without limits. Education world is no exception. The use of ICT in language teaching and learning might have a positive effect on learners' academic achievements (Hartoyo, 2009; Mellati & Khademi, 2014). Em-

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ploying technological devices in language learning improves the quality of education. Social network is a new and updated trend in the technology world that has been referred to networked tools that allow learners to communicate, interact and share their ideas and interests with each other (Aderson, 2010). Social networks such as WhatsApp have opened up new interaction opportunities among teachers and learners. The use of social networks is becoming popular in everyday communication. It is even used for collaborative learning tasks, especially in language learning.

Contemporary educational policy, curriculum designing, and instructional pedagogy have been profoundly affected by impressive new global information and communication technologies (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014). New modern language competencies include the ability to collaborate with others on processes of problem-solving, textual co-construction, negotiation, and cooperative production and presentation even when working in different locations and connecting only by these new technologies. Like other fields of study, language teaching have also influenced by new language teaching sources and software. (Chipunza, 2013). They stated that wireless technologies such as laptop computers, mobile phones, especially smart-phones, create a revolution in education that transform the traditional classroom-based learning into lifelong learning. Increasing access to internet resources, language learners have an affluence of authentic oral, written, linguistic corpora and concordant programs that help them solve their language problems. Guy (2010) declared that the field of mobile learning is relentlessly advancing and there are some research studies that explore the advances of mobile technologies in learning environments unfold on a regular basis and there have been several attempts to classify the definitions of mobile learning used in the literature into a comprehensive framework, e.g. Traxler (2010) identified that three categories of mobile learning have been used in past literature. The first category was those early approaches to define mobile learning tended to focus on the nature of mobile devices, referring particularly to handheld or palmtop electronic devices. The next category exhibited a greater focus on mobility, but was largely still directed towards the mobility of the technology. The last category emphasized the mobility of the learners and the learning process. Farley, Murphy, and Rees (2013) stated that those definitions that incorporate a description of the technology are in danger of becoming obsolete as mobile technologies, mobile applications, and the capabilities of these technologies are changing in a rapid velocity.

Although previous research studies pointed out several challenges in adopting E-learning environments in language education and in the EFL contexts, it has also identified numerous advantages of such technology-based instructions. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) demonstrated that Mobile learning (M-learning) or Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers to any form of learning that happens when the learner is not at a fixed, predetermined location. In these kinds of distance learning, learners take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies and are acknowledged as an interactive type of technology-based instruction. The magnificence of this kind of learning is that learners are actively involved in learning activities and tasks by interaction and collaboration using a smart-mobile phone. In Kukulska-Hulme's (2006) words, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) illustrated an approach to language learning that is enhanced through utilizing a mobile device. MALL is a subcategory of both Mobile learning (M-learning) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). In MALL settings, learners are able to access language learning materials, and communicate with their teachers and peers at anytime and anywhere. Hsu, Wang, and Comac (2008) expressed that the emergence of the third generation (3G) of mobile services was a revolution in language learning and provided