**MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING: CHARACTERISTICS, PEDAGOGICAL SHIFTS, AND RESEARCH INSIGHTS**

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***Abstract***: *This article attempts to contribute to the ongoing discourse on Mobile Assisted Language Learning by reflecting on the characteristics, pedagogical adaptations, and research pertaining to this subject in the context of Kazakhstan. By synthesizing global trends and local findings, it provides a foundation for informed decisions on integrating and advancing mobile learning in Kazakhstani language education.*

***Keywords****: language education, mobile learning, mobile assisted language learning, e-learning, computer assisted language learning, digital technology in language education*

**МОБИЛЬДІ ҚҰРЫЛҒЫЛАРМЕН ТІЛ ҮЙРЕНУ: ЕРЕКШЕЛІКТЕРІ, ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ ӨЗГЕРІСТЕРІ ЖӘНЕ ЗЕРТТЕУ НӘТИЖЕЛЕРІ**

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***Түйіндеме****: Мақалада Қазақстандағы білім беру контекстінде осы тақырыпқа байланысты педагогикалық тәсілдер мен зерттеу нәтижелерінің ерекшеліктерін, бейімделуін ұсына отырып, мобильді құрылғылардың көмегімен шет тілдерін үйрену туралы жалғасып жатқан дискурсқа өз үлесін қосуға әрекет жасалды. Жаһандық үрдістер мен жергілікті зерттеулер нәтижелерінің синтезі қазақстандық тілдік білім беру шеңберінде мобильді құрылғылардың көмегімен шет тілдерін оқытуды интеграциялау мен ілгерілетудің негізі болып табылады.*

***Түйін сөздер****: лингводидактика, мобильді оқыту, мобильді құрылғылар арқылы шет тілдерін үйрену, электронды оқыту, компьютерлік технологиялар арқылы шет тілдерін үйрену, шет тілдерін оқытудағы сандық технологиялар*

**ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ЯЗЫКА С ПОМОЩЬЮ МОБИЛЬНЫХ УСТРОЙСТВ: ОСОБЕННОСТИ, ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ И РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ**

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***Аннотация****: В статье предпринята попытка внести свой вклад в продолжающийся дискурс об изучении иностранных языков с помощью мобильных устройств, представив особенности, адаптации педагогических подходов и результаты исследований, связанных с этой темой, в контексте образования в Казахстане. Синтез глобальных тенденций и результатов местных исследований служит основой интеграции и продвижения изучения иностранных языков с помощью мобильных устройств в рамках казахстанского языкового образования.*

***Ключевые слова****: лингводидактика, мобильное обучение, изучение иностранных языков с помощью мобильных устройств, электронное обучение, изучение иностранных языков с помощью компьютерных технологий, цифровые технологии в преподавании иностранных языков*

*Introduction*

In the 21st century with rapid developments in the technological landscape, when acquiring various electronic devices is more accessible than ever, educators must adapt to modern demands.

In 2017, the European Commission developed a European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators, detailing connections between educators’ professional engagements and various facets of digital literacy [1]. With the framework, teachers can assess their competence levels in various areas, ranging from Newcomer to Pioneer, similar to the CEFR scale, enabling them to assess their proficiency in different domains.

The most commonly used term to describe the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the instruction of foreign languages is Computer Assisted Language Learning, abbreviated as CALL. Levy defines CALL as “the exploration and examination of computer applications in the context of language teaching and learning” [2].

A contemporary method in foreign language education is the successor of CALL, known as MALL, which stands for Mobile Assisted Language Learning.

*Definition*

Mobile Assisted Language Learning, abbreviated as MALL, surfaced in the 1990s as a fusion of Mobile Learning and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Unlike the relatively straightforward definition of CALL provided by Levy, pinning down the exact definition of Mobile Learning poses a greater challenge. Researchers offering definitions of Mobile Learning often highlight various aspects, such as the incorporation of mobile technologies in the learning process, the portability of devices, or the learner's perspective. The combination of all of these aspects can be found in a definition by El-Hussein and Cronje that MALL is “any type of learning that takes place in learning environments and spaces that take account of the mobility of technology, mobility of learners and mobility of learning” [3].

While the formal adoption of the term “Mobile Assisted Language Learning” occurred in 2006, credited to Chinnery [4], the exploration of mobile devices for language learning can be traced back to as early as 1994. The initial research in this realm primarily concentrated on improving the writing skills of Canadian secondary school students in their native English language [5]. It was only later that subsequent studies delved into the use of various portable devices for learning foreign languages. This shift in focus was prompted by the widespread popularity of bilingual pocket dictionaries in Japan, which captured researchers’ attention and prompted investigations into their potential as tools for learning the English language [6].

*Key features*

MALL should not be regarded as merely a subset of CALL, as according to Kukulska-Halme and Shields MALL is distinguished from CALL by its utilization of individual, portable devices, facilitating novel learning approaches and highlighting the consistent or spontaneous accessibility across various usage contexts. [7]. However, MALL is not simply a replacement for CALL but rather it complements it, jointly assisting learners in improving their skills.

The distinctive feature of MALL, as well as mobile learning in general, is its spontaneity. The widespread availability of mobile devices enables learners to improve their language skills without being limited by geographical constraints. They have the opportunity to exercise during brief intervals, such as commuting and queuing, transforming the traditional classroom language education model and practicing learner autonomy.

Another distinguishing trait of MALL lies in its collaborative and interactive nature. MALL platforms encourage learner collaboration by enabling interactions and shared learning experiences. By using these tools, learners can work together in activities, discussions, and projects, creating a sense of community and mutual support. Additionally, MALL not only helps students collaborate with each other but also promotes a collaborative relationship between students and teachers. MALL tools empower teachers to offer personalized and private guidance, feedback, and support, making students actively contribute to their own learning experiences.

Moreover, MALL seamlessly integrates diverse components to form an extensive language learning environment. This integration includes multimedia elements, social components, and various interactive exercises. The collaborative and integrative structure of MALL promotes a comprehensive approach to language acquisition, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that technology alone does not produce improved educational outcomes. Digital tools, however advanced, cannot serve as a substitute for a teaching method, even more so for a teacher. The crucial elements of pedagogy, mentorship, and the nuanced understanding of individual learning needs that an experienced teacher brings to the educational process cannot be replicated by technology alone. While digital tools can enhance and complement teaching methodologies, the irreplaceable human element in education remains integral for fostering an effective learning experience.

*Pedagogy shifts*

With the transition from traditional language teaching approaches to Mobile Assisted Language Learning, a concurrent shift in the pedagogy of language instruction has emerged. This evolution reflects a departure from conventional methodologies to more dynamic, technology-integrated teaching practices. The incorporation of MALL has necessitated a reevaluation and adaptation of pedagogical strategies to effectively harness the benefits of various mobile technologies in language education.

Historically in CALL, the predecessor of MALL, Warschauer distinguishes three chronological phases: (1) Structural or Behaviouristic CALL (1950s – 1970s), (2) Communicative CALL (1970s – 1990s), and (3) Integrative CALL (1990s), which were characterised by varying student-teacher model roles [8].

The phase of behaviouristic CALL began in the 1950s. The basis of this phase, the psychological theory of behaviourism, declared that activities should entail drilling. In this methodology, the computer functioned as a tutor, being considered optimal for conducting repetitive drills because the machine does not tire of presenting the same material and can offer immediate, non-judgmental feedback [8].

The second phase of communicative CALL began in the 1970s as a reaction to the behavioural approach. The communicative approach focused on using the language rather than the language itself. In this approach tasks centered on communication, encompassing activities like dialogues and written assignments. Additionally, there were other computer models in the communicative phase, focusing on tasks like spell checking, grammar verification, and programs for reconstructing text, where the computer served as a tool, instead of as a tutor.

The integrative CALL approach (1990s) was developed after the communicative approach didn’t live up to its expectations. Critics of Communicative CALL found that teaching compartmentalized skills or structures was not beneficial [10]. Therefore, proponents of the integrative approach aimed to integrate 4 language macro skills - listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

Palalas and Hoven state that using computers for language learning makes teaching more about communication and understanding meaning, not just memorizing words and grammar rules. They also argue that this approach shifts from teachers leading the class to letting students take more control of their learning. This change encourages students to think critically while solving real-world problems. These tasks often require both communicative competencies and creativity [9].

As a successor to CALL, MALL adopts important changes in language teaching. However, its unique characteristics present a set of challenges that are different from both traditional and CALL methods in language education.

Concerning the mobility feature of MALL, both students and educators have the opportunity to partake in virtual communication at any time and from any location. This extends the scope of learning beyond the traditional classroom boundaries, enabling them to access resources within authentic communicative scenarios. Palalas and Hoven observe that rather than introducing simulated real-life language practice through methods like role-play, recordings, movies, computer-based activities, or simulations in the classroom, mobile language learners can now transfer their language activities into the actual environment where the target language is spoken [9].

MALL empowers the design of educational encounters specifically crafted to match the distinct characteristics, requirements, and routines of each individual learner, fostering a personalized and effective learning environment. They have the flexibility to choose content and resources that are pertinent to their specific learning requirements at any given moment. Generally, this leads to increased motivation for learners, higher involvement in the learning process, and a greater tendency for self-directed learning.

The teacher’s role in MALL is to be a facilitator, who guides and supports learners in navigating digital resources, selecting appropriate materials, and understanding how to effectively utilize mobile devices in the process of language acquisition. Educators assist learners in developing digital literacy skills, ensuring they are comfortable and proficient in using mobile devices and language learning apps. Teachers may encourage collaborative learning in online spaces, facilitating discussions, group projects, or language exchange opportunities through digital platforms. One of the most significant things is that teachers in MALL remain adaptable. Continuous professional development ensures they stay informed about emerging technologies and effective pedagogical strategies in the digital language learning landscape.

Within the framework of language education in Kazakhstan, there have been several researches on this topic, yielding similar results. In 2015 Krivoruchko et al. carried out a study on the efficacy of MALL in enhancing the effective teaching of Technical English, particularly focusing on the mastery of technical terminology [10]. To facilitate this, an electronic textbook was developed for the “Foreign language (English)” discipline. The research methodology incorporated group sessions with students enrolled in both Kazakh and Russian language courses. This method enabled students to collaboratively interact with technical texts, utilizing their proficiency in multiple languages. The work on technical terms encompassed various activities, including classification based on word formation (prefixal-suffix, compound words, acronyms), nominal, verbal, and adverbial grounds, and conceptualization of objects and activities. The experimental phase of the research has yielded compelling results, demonstrating the effectiveness of incorporating electronic and multimedia courses in foreign language training, especially in environments where there is limited exposure to a foreign language, and time constraints exist for language learning.

In 2022, Togaibayeva et al. conducted a study looking at how key aspects of mobile learning influence how students feel about learning a foreign language. The research also delved into students' perspectives on the utility of mobile learning and its correlation with academic achievement [11]. Furthermore, the investigation explored whether students’ academic performance is affected by their perceived satisfaction with language learning and their views on the effectiveness of mobile learning. A group of 150 second-year philology students, bilingual in Kazakh and Russian, studying English at K.Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, participated voluntarily in the study. The research utilized the VKontakte social network to create a group for effective access to educational materials, with the teacher serving as the group administrator. The study employed a series of questionnaires and an achievement test to collect and analyze data, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of mobile learning on language acquisition and student outcomes. The results showed that perceived satisfaction with mobile learning is strongly influenced by the alignment of mobile content with the needs of students and their motivation to use mobile learning. This suggests that enhancements in the caliber of mobile content and the boost in motivation can greatly elevate perceived satisfaction with mobile learning. Furthermore, the findings underscore the critical impact of students’ perceptions on academic performance. The satisfaction students feel about mobile learning and how useful they think it is have a big impact on their academic success.

*Conclusion*

MALL is reshaping the landscape of language instruction and acquisition. As evidenced by the literature and empirical studies, MALL provides a multitude of benefits, ranging from increased learner autonomy and motivation to the flexibility and ubiquity offered by mobile devices.

The review of pedagogical shifts associated with MALL underscores the dynamic role of technology in language education. Traditional classroom boundaries are transcended as learners engage with language materials anytime, anywhere. Moreover, the personalized and adaptive nature of MALL allows for individualised language learning experiences.

The practical significance of MALL is apparent in its ability to cater to individual learner characteristics, needs, and habits. The freedom to select relevant content and resources at opportune moments not only enhances engagement but also contributes to a more meaningful and personalized language learning journey.

Examining the teacher’s role in MALL reveals a shift from a traditional authority figure to a facilitator and guide. Teachers become orchestrators creating interactive, collaborative, and dynamic learning environments. This shift aligns with the evolving nature of education in the digital era, emphasizing the partnership between educators and technology.

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