

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF INDIA (ELTAI)

Reports on Workshops on Mobile Learning conducted with the Support of Hornby Trust, UK

1. Two-Day Workshop on 'Mobile-Enhanced Language Learning' organized by ELTAI in Association with the Dept. of English, B. S. Abdur Rahman University, Chennai (21-22 August 2015)

A two-day workshop on 'Mobile-Enhanced Language Learning' was conducted by ELTAI in association with the Department of English, B. S. Abdur Rahman University, Vandalur, on the outskirts of Chennai, on 21st and 22nd August, 2015. Dr. Revathi Viswanathan, Head of the Department of English, was the organizing secretary. She was also a resource person assisted by Dr. P. N. Ramani (National Vice-President) and Dr. K. Elango (National Secretary, ELTAI). The workshop was attended by over 25 participants from all over the country including a few teachers nominated by some of the active chapters of ELTAI.

In a brief, simple inaugural session, Dr. Revathi welcomed the participants from far and wide; Dr. S. Rajagopalan, Patron of ELTAI, outlined the aim and scope of the workshop, and spoke about ELTAI's initiatives in training teachers in the use of technology in their practices. The workshop was formally inaugurated by Dr. V. M. Periasamy, Pro Vice Chancellor of the host university. He pointed to the changing dynamics of teaching and learning environments, and emphasized the need for educators to become familiar with, and

capable of, using technology in teaching and learning, particularly the use of mobile devices. In this context, he referred to the initiatives of the university to encourage the faculty to use technology in their teaching, including the bold decision of permitting Dr. Revathi to use mobile technology for the purpose. Dr. Elango also spoke of the need for teachers to update themselves in teaching skills including the use of technology to support student learning and help them learn effectively and become employable.

In the first technical session that followed, Dr. Ramani introduced the concept of mobile-enhanced language learning to the participants. He explained the term 'mobile' by referring to the mobility of *devices*, *learners*, and *learning experiences*. He then discussed the potential benefits of using mobile devices for supporting and enhancing student learning.

This was followed by Dr. Elango's interesting and thought-provoking presentation on using the mobile phone in which he showed how their use is widespread even in rural areas across all segments of society. He shared the experiences of his students' use of mobile phones for a wide range of communicative purposes and some of the Mobile Apps that could be used for teaching English language skills as well as grammar and vocabulary.

In the next pre-lunch session, Dr. Revathi elaborated the concept of mobile devices and discussed the infrastructural requirements for using such devices in the classroom. She then demonstrated to the participants how to download resources to one's mobile phone (Smart Phone) using an app. In the afternoon, the participants had a hands-on session in which they downloaded a few materials for learning the four skills of English besides grammar and vocabulary. Dr. Ramani discussed how to evaluate the resources, thus downloaded, for their usefulness in the participants' own teaching contexts. There was interesting discussion among the participants, as well as between them and the resource persons.

The second day began with a demonstration by Dr. Revathi on creating an app using Yapp. The participants were then asked to create an app and share resources among themselves, an experience that would help them to do likewise with their students. All the participants successfully created their own apps in the language lab and exchanged language resources through the app. They were guided and helped by the resource persons to complete the tasks assigned.

In the afternoon, the participants were asked to work in groups and prepare worksheets/task sheets for the four language skills as well as for grammar and vocabulary, each group working on one of those areas. They were given clear guidelines for preparing the worksheets/task sheets. In the last session, there was an open discussion on the challenges and problems the participants might face in implementing

mobile learning in their teaching contexts as well as suggestions for overcoming them.

The two-day workshop came to a close with all the participants giving their written, open-ended feedback on the various sessions, some of them sharing their experiences orally, a short vote of thanks by the organizing secretary, and distribution of participation certificates. The programme came to an end with the singing of the national anthem.

It was found to be a very useful interactive session for the participants and the resource persons alike. The participants left the venue visibly happy with the positive outcomes of the workshop. Excerpts from their written feedback:

- “A well-planned workshop —very inspiring and useful”
- “An eye-opener — got trained in developing a mobile application”
- “Well-initiated in mobile learning”
- “Learnt how to integrate the use of the mobile in class-room teaching”

2. Workshop on ‘Mobile-Enhanced Language Learning’ for Student Teachers organized by ELTAI Thoothukudi Chapter (2 December 2015)

The Thoothukudi Chapter of ELTAI, which functions from Annammal College of Education for Women (Thoothukudi), organized a Workshop on Mobile-Enhanced Language Learning on 2 December 2015. It was an eight-hour training programme: 4 sessions, each for two hours. Forty-six

prospective teachers attended the workshop.

The student teachers were given training in the use of Podcasts for listening and speaking, Twitter, Facebook, Google Groups, Google Drive, and blogs. All the trainees were given opportunity to use and create podcasts. They learnt to create their own blogs and to post text, video, and presentations. A Google Group was created for them and they also learnt to create groups to share knowledge. The resource persons provided hands-on experience to all the participants.

Dr. A. Joycilin Shermila, Convener of ELT@I Thoothukudi Chapter, gave the first session. She gave an introduction about how mobile devices help in 'anywhere, anytime' learning. She listed out a few useful mobile apps, such as Vocabulary Builder, PowerVocab Word Game, dictionary apps, and grammar learning apps from the British Council's Learn English site. This gave an orientation to the participants on using mobile phones to learn English. She then gave training in the use of Podcasts to develop communication skills. The participants listened to podcasts and did some simple tasks. She also taught them to create their own podcasts using Audacity. The next session was on the use of blogs for learning. All the participants were helped to create their own blog and to insert files, YouTube videos and documents in their blog. All the trainees were immensely benefitted by this and this created confidence in them to post their study material in the web.

The importance of social networking sites

in developing language skills was highlighted by Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh. The possibilities of using social networking sites like the Facebook and Twitter for building online communities of learners were introduced effectively. In addition to Social Networking, he presented how Google groups and Google Drive could be of help in language learning. He helped the participants to create a group and to share files through Drive.

All the participants were given Certificates of Participation. The participants' feedback on the workshop proved that it was a good attempt. ELT@I Thoothukudi Chapter whole-heartedly thanks ELT@I for the support provided to organize this workshop at Thoothukudi.

3. Two-day Workshop on 'Mobile Learning of Communication Skills' organized by ELTAI in association with Annamalai University (22-23 January 2016)

A two-day workshop on 'Mobile Learning of Communication skills', supported by the Hornby Trust, UK, was organized by ELTAI for university students on 22-23 January 2016 at Annamalai University, Annamalai nagar in Tamil Nadu State (India). The workshop was directed by Dr. S. Rajagopalan, Project Head, ELTAI, assisted by three well-known ELT professionals—Dr. Revathi Viswanathan (Professor and Head, Department of English, B. S. Abdur Rahman University, Chennai), Dr. Jaya Ramakrishnan (Department of English, Easwari Engineering College, Chennai), and Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh (Department of

English, VOC College of Arts and Science, Thoothukudi). Dr. M. Harikrishnan, Professor and Head, Department of Education, Annamalai University, made the organizational arrangements for the workshop.

The workshop was formally inaugurated by Dr. R. Kathiresan, Dean and Syndicate Member of the University. Dr. Rajagopalan explained the concept of Virtual Learning and outlined the scope of the two-day workshop. He stressed the need for educating students in using their smart phones for improving their communication skills in English.

In the technical sessions that followed, the students had 'hands-on experiences' with their mobiles. They were made to listen to selected podcasts and then asked to record one or two podcasts themselves. Then they created blogs and learnt about the different features of a blog and how it would contribute to the development of their writing skills apart from its other uses. Each one of the participants then created a wiki and learnt about the use of wikis for doing collaborative projects. They also opened Facebook and Twitter accounts and learnt about the use of social networking sites for establishing teacher-student and student-student contacts, sharing information, and building inter-personal relationships. They were also trained to create a Google group for their class. They were then acquainted with the use of Google and Yahoo groups for online discussions.

In short, students learnt how they could

improve their communication skills in English using their smart phones, apart from texting messages to their friends as they do now.

4. A National Workshop on Mobile Learning—Communicating, Connecting, and Collaborating organized by ELTAI at Loyola College, Chennai (27-28 February 2016)

Teachers of various colleges and schools from Chennai and other parts of the country attended a two-day workshop conducted by ELTAI with Shri Dr. Rajagopalan as the Project Head in association with Loyola College (Chennai) on 27-28 February 2016 on the optimum use of smart phones in the teaching learning process. The workshop began formally with the lighting of the lamp by the Principal of the college, Head of the English Department, and other dignitaries.

The Chief Guest Mr. Ganapathi Ramachandran spoke on how today people live in an electronic era and so how it is important for all teachers to use technology in teaching. The Guest of Honour Shri Saravana Krishna also spoke of how mobile phones are ubiquitous and one has to make the best use of this device to enhance one's language skills. Then Dr. S. Rajagopalan introduced the theme of the workshop and explained how learning involves communicating, connecting with other learners as well as with the teacher, and collaborating with other learners.

The first session on 'Introduction to Mobile Learning' was given by Dr. Elango, National Secretary, ELTAI. He stressed the point that

the mobile phone supports 'anytime and anywhere' learning efficiently, compared to other devices and hence it can be an effective tool for teaching and learning. In the second session, Dr. Albert P Rayan listed a number of free apps which would help teachers and students in the process of learning the language skills.

The post-lunch session was led by Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh, Department of English, VOC College of Arts and Science, Thoothukudi. He enlightened the teachers on Google Drive and wiki. In the technical sessions that followed, teachers had hands-on experience with their mobiles creating a wiki virtual classroom. They learnt the use of wikis for making students do collaborative projects and the use of social networking sites for establishing teacher-student and student-student contacts, sharing information, and building personal relationships. They were then acquainted

with the use of Google and Yahoo groups for online discussions.

The second day began with Dr. Revathi Viswanathan, Professor and Head, Department of English, B. S. Abdur Rahman University, Chennai, dealing with communication by creating a blog and twitter account. She threw light on how activities could be designed by teachers on blogs. All the teacher participants were made to create a blog and a twitter account. It was an interactive session where teachers also contributed by designing activities using a piece of writing from a blog.

The last session of the day was given by Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh on collaborating. He began the session by making the participants understand the meaning of 'collaboration' in the educational context. He then introduced the teachers to the utility and features of Google Drive.

FOR THE ATTENTION OF OUR MEMBERS

Do you want to access your membership details in our database?

Click on 'Member Login' at the top right hand corner of our Home page and enter your name or membership ID. In the dialogue box that opens, click on 'View Members' and you will get the membership details.

If you do not know or remember your membership ID, check the address slip pasted on the brown wrapper of the journal copy you receive by post – you will find it above the address.

You may also write to eltai_india@yahoo.co.in requesting us for the information.