Pocket Mobile Learning: Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract

Imagine yourself stuck in a busy airport chock full of business commuters, watching delay after delay post to the digital screen that announces incoming and departing flights. Rather than allowing you time to be completely wasted by circumstances beyond your control, you are absorbing some continuing education with posted learning materials, or better yet a live instructor from hundreds if not thousands of miles away. What if, in the not-too-distant future, you could gain back hours of such useful time each day. How can this be possible? M-learning combines the technologies of mobile communications with e-Learning, which allows you to develop learning content that integrates with mobile applications and provides learning and performance in a just-in-time, just-in-place dynamic. This paper is excited to present some opportunities to look at ways that learning and performance support the improvement of English as a second language. Most English as a foreign Language contexts have been characterized as traditional language learning settings in which teachers direct the learning process, and students are the assumed as passive receptors of knowledge. This research aims to examine the development of mobile applications in order to provide more flexible possibilities for student's learning.

Introduction

Today, new iPhone or Android phone users face the quandary of which of the hundreds of thousands of apps (applications) they should choose. This phenomenon, not surprisingly has led to tremendous interest among educators. Mobile learning (often "m-learning") is in itself not new, but new devices with enhanced capabilities have increased the interest level, including among language educators. Interest in the use of a mobile phone to access the Internet for learning English in general, and listening skills in particular, has been increasing over the last years. This paper represents a work in progress that would demonstrate that it is possible to improve the learning of English as a L2 through the using of the mobile applications. Generally mobile application for learning a second language are designed for all learners, whether the learner is a beginner or an expert. The paper investigates the potential of mobile phones in maintaining effective learning environments and explore whether mobile phones can assist language learners in establishing a collaborative mobile phones. The integration of mobile phones technologies into tertiary education holds both opportunities and risks for the quality of mobile learning .Technology in education is not new but times are changing as we move into more distributed contexts with a variety of pedagogical motivations. Early efforts focused on collaboration within a more traditional learning environment. Further questions exist as to what degree and in what ways institutions can become a part of this emerging student-centered learning environment and how they can maximize the impact of that involvement. Students have a variety of alternative uses for any mobile device. In particular, a question exists as to the characteristics of learning applications that will be accepted and meaningful to students in a collaborative learning space with a variety of interaction channels. This short paper is excited to present some opportunities to look at ways that learning and performance support the improvement of English as a second language. Most English as a foreign Language contexts have been characterized as traditional language learning settings in which teachers direct the learning process, and students are the assumed as passive receptors of knowledge. In addition, ELF (English as a Foreign Language) learning has also been criticized as an in-class-only learning practice due to the rare opportunities an EFL learner is expected to encounter outside the boundaries of the classroom. This indicates the need for practice incorporation of a student-centered approach and contextualized language learning. Thus, mobile technology is examined here as a means to enhance different student-centered practices and to create meaningful outside-classroom and contextualized learning opportunities. Effective use of students' out-of-class time is a basic goal of recent computer-based language instruction, particularly in a university environment, where in-class language practice time is limited. When an out-of-class practice is limited in class time can be indicated to face communication and useful guidance for students on how to exploit out-of-class learning opportunities and to support students' development as independent strategic learners. Technology can also be integrated to provide ELF learners with authentic and meaningful dialogic engagement with contextual elements of an out-of-class learning environment. Indeed, technology can be used to engage language learners with broader communities and local and international cultures and enhances their sense of community by participating in the community outside the classroom . Examples of technological tools that can provide rich out-of-class learning opportunities for EFL learners include email, blogs, podcasting, and mobile technologies, the well –known application or app. The integration of mobile technology, particularly, for contextualizing language learning is potentially valuable. The sheer mobility of mobile technologies enables student interaction with such a wide range of location-based contexts. Mobile phones, for example, can effectively connect between the culture of student home life and student experiences , and can integrate home cultures of students into their classroom learning. Furthermore, mobile

phones can bridge the divide between the technologies students use at home and what they use in school. Besides, the mobile generation, current young students have developed extensive social communities outside the classroom that can be harnessed for contextually based out-of-class EFL activities. In this paper, we explore the impact on learning of these applications designed for use outside the classroom.

Mobile learning and Context awareness

Petersen, Divitini, and Chabert (2008) considered a socio-constructivist authentic language learning approach to mobile language learning. Their learning design was highly supported by collaboration, interaction, and developing a sense of community through mobile community blogs, particularly when students were physically present in the target language setting and culture, and/or when they were away from their classmates. The researchers found that participants" sense of community "and belonging to the language learner community is not high, and participants" identity "is not well identified. Researchers attributed this to the lack of identity among members as a community and believed that the blogs are incapable of strengthening new, rather than existing communities. It is also noticed that participants are not eager to collaborate in the mobile blog due to the hesitation and the lack of confidence among students. For the current paper, however, it is important to point out that the sense of community and belonging to the learning context among students should be high, and that students are keen to engage in authentic learning activities outside the classroom. Mobile devices, e.g., PDAs and "smartphones," are a categorically different form of technology with different behavioral consequences. The ubiquitous nature of these mobile technologies in terms of being constantly within reach of the users and continuously connected to a broader communications network give them a unique status in the realm of technology support for education and learning. In this sense, these devices become a form of "wearable" technology that places students in the center of their own unique learning environment. They have the opportunity to choose what to access, when and where, and with more degrees of freedom than other forms of technology support e.g., PCs. Self-guided exploration has been found to be conducive to the development of intrinsic motivation in more traditional educational settings. We can enhance learning motivation by emphasizing the importance and applicability of the material and by trying to connect the material to students' intrinsic motivation. It is particularly noticed that learning motivation is likely to be greater if a student feels a particular class is consistent with their interests and with personally satisfying career goals. The early development of high learning motivation is critical. Thus it is important to focus on building learning motivation for education in general, as well as for specific classes . Mobile devices, e.g., PDAs and "smartphones," are increasingly pervasive, especially in student populations. In some parts of the world this exceeds 100%, i.e., each student may have more than one such device. The pervasive nature of these devices provides an unprecedented opportunity for creation of learning applications. As with research, we can increasingly expect that our students will (or can be mandated to) have personal access to a mobile device to complement their traditional learning activities.

Research environment

During the ongoing of the research the development of mobile applications will be focused on providing more flexible possibilities for student learning. Students in Bari are like most others, juggling busy lives and moving in and out of wired and wireless environments. I would like to suggest a model for the manner in which one may consider the elements of

mobile computing which is more congruent with current practice and infrastructure. Students move between the:

☐ *connected mode* (at the University),

☐ *nomadic mode* (at home or connect to a desktop computer in class or at home), and

☐ *disconnected mode* (on public transport, away from wired or wireless connections).

The current project is a holistic approach that seeks to:

1.Develop the technical infrastructure that enables academics and students to collaborative activities to the web or personal digital assistants or smart phones;

2. Develop the technical infrastructure to allow lecturers to monitor student activity, record student learning outcomes about student interactions on their PDAs to the lecturers from within the university learning management system (LMS), BlackBoard and provide advice (mainly pedagogical) and support (with examples) for developing content suitable for mobile learning.

3. To create an environment for application and research, assessments of usefulness and acceptance will be made during the semester, while at the same time, existing infrastructure, support, and adoption problems will be addressed. The experiences should prove that students will successfully equipped with PDAs, and were using them every week in their core courses. A mobile Exercise application has been developed and evaluated.

Procedure

Students will need to answer an interview in order to identify any difficulties they may have experienced while studying English, thus thinking over their current study plan. For three days a week, students are expected to interact with a mobile application aimed at improving English learning skills. Mobile phones will facilitate the ways in which students reflect on one another's uploaded material (apps). They will be instructed on how to add captions, descriptive tag lines and starter questions to their uploaded material and, also, on how to add all these to the discussion board. The applications are intended to give students a chance to reflect on social events occurring outside of the classroom and to point out their social and cultural relevant features. Moreover, the participants in this research are supposed to have relatively different cultural backgrounds and habits. Once all participants have mastered the use of the applications, they will need to provide feedback on the uploaded apps. Each participant can use up to 5 comments and 3 answers over the six-week timeframe. During this particular activity the researcher will facilitate discussion and provide guidance when this is needed. For this reason, both the students and the researcher will jointly single out from the discussion elements that have linguistic significance and can benefit the learning process. Additionally, the students will be able to switch simultaneously between the applications and the traditional language exercises conducted in class. Application logs and discussion board contents from the previous week will be integrated into discussions conducted in the classroom. Mobile phones will help students to find ways of learning that fit in with their typical everyday mobile phone usage, which is the actual key distinction between computer-based and mobile-based language instructions. Moreover, using informal social media (e.g. The Learn English app), should increase the students' active involvement in the learning process as it invites them to implement contextual elements from their own environment. By the same token, integrating local cultural norms into the study plan would bring students to cooperating with one another through and within the language they study. Now you can choose when and how to learn: anytime, anywhere, 30 seconds or 30 minutes, at home or on the go. Teach yourself the basics, or give yourself a challenge. Explore our apps to find out more. dictionary apps are ideal for looking up words on the move, and you can use the audio to learn how to say the words correctly. Accessing dictionaries, either

online or dictionary applications they had downloaded, was a common activity. Many teachers are enthusiastic about this because it means that students don't have to carry around heavy dictionaries and also because the dictionaries they are accessing often have audio examples of pronunciation. The obstacles mentioned are cost, mainly charges for mobile connectivity, and worries about students or the teachers themselves having to pay to access their mobile course materials. Another problem is the variety of different mobile devices being used by students and the fact that not all students have them. Last, and possibly the most significant, is the lack of available content specifically designed for language learning. Whereas teachers and students seem willing to embrace this technology, ELT publishers are lagging behind. Services such as iTunes now provide simple payment and distribution platforms as well as the digital rights security that should allow publishers to start to generate large-scale online sales of e-products at much lower prices (many mobile applications cost between 10% to 20% of their desktop equivalents). Yet the response from many publishers has been slow. This is the ideal time for publishers to jump on the mobile wave and start delivering interactive and affordable mobile content.

Students will answer to an interview in order to identify any difficulties they might have encountered while learning English and to reflect on the current design of the study. Over three days in a week, all students will schedule to upload mobile application aimed to improve the learning of English. Students are expected to reflect on each other's uploaded materials (app) using mobile phone as well. Students will be informed that uploaded materials should be associated with captions, descriptions, or starter questions to the discussion board created by the uploading student. Application also should let students reflect on some social occasion or event that occurs out of the class, or have some local or cultural characteristics. Specifically participants in this research are believed to have relatively different cultural backgrounds and customs. When all the participants in the research will be familiar to the using of applications, they will be required to respond and comment on uploaded app with 5 comments and 3 responses as a minimum for each participant over the six week duration. The researchers' role in this activity is to facilitate discussion and to provide guidance when it will be necessary. Moreover, both the students and the researcher will be able to identify, from the discussion, elements that have linguistic characteristic that could benefit language learning. The students also will be able to connect between in class linguistic activities and the mobile exercise contextual topics. In other words, the application activity and the discussion board content from the week prior will be integrated into in-class discussion. Mobile phones will assist students more broadly to find ways of learning that fit with their mobile lifestyle out of class hours. This is the key distinction between computer-assisted and mobile-assisted language instruction. Moreover, the utilization of informal social media, such as Learn English Grammar app, should increase student's engagement in the learning task, and motivated them to implement contextual elements form their own environment. In addition, the integration of local cultural norms into the learning design would assist students to collaborate with each other in the target language.

Thanks to mobile phones technologies, students develop their own interests and abilities to create learning resources that reflect the learning context and students' own choices. Most importantly , the utilization of tools that students are already familiar with, such as mobile phone play an important role in maintaining a positive sense of community and authentic learning opportunities outside the classroom. Thus, it is important to point out that the implementation of learning tools , that students are already accustomed to save both students' and teachers' time, and does not require additional training. So far as student-generated

content is concerned , this research draws out what the learning context offer to students in ways that allowed them to create meaningful learning resources during their daily interaction with external environment. Student-generated learning content not only may support collaboration and a community of practice among students, but it also may foster their individual creativity and competitiveness. This study may lead student's mobile learning initiatives by creating their learning content and resources and manipulating their mobile social interaction. However, future mobile language learning design should consider students who might be unaware of the potential of their mobile phones for learning. The anytime/anyplace/any pace availability of mobile devices is felt to provide an environment in which barriers to participation are accordingly lowered. There is also an element of extrinsic motivation in conjunction with the e-token approach and availability of support designed to help students prepare for their final exam.

Conclusion

Empirically, we should affirm that those students who are motivated to use the mobile applications may tend to achieve higher levels of performance as indicated on the mid-term exam, final exam and ultimate course grade, and this dependent of whether the motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic. However, we caution that the results we should be analyze as preliminary and not necessarily demonstrative of enhanced learning on the part of the students. For example, there is no special way to discern from the results that the pool of students who may choose the use the mobile applications are not just simply better performing students compared to those who may choose to not use the mobile applications, or that their learning style is more compatible with PDA use in accordance with application characteristics. Further, it is questionable whether exam performance has any special correlation with learning. Whether constructive alignment is confirmatively a moderator on performance also remains a question. There was no stratification in the sample that enabled such level of detailed comparison. How to get students to explore a domain beyond the scope of a particular instance is also a remaining challenge**.** In summary, learning interventions require a prodigious amount of concerted effort with iterative and prolonged student and staff involvement and interaction as process and technology join in pedagogical evolution. Lacking a concerted level of effort and seamless integration of technology, the students do not change habits and engage in new forms of learning. Overall, general use of the mobile applications leaves much room for improvement, both in terms of the existing applications and, especially, the newer applications that have yet to be evaluated. From this perspective, mobile applications can become an increasingly important segment of the student learning time and space. We will not suggest that PDAs will replace books. In fact, expecting students to read a traditional text on a PDA is even less feasible than expecting them to read from a book. What it does suggest is a pedagogical rethink of the way we educate "digital natives" to include the kinds of learning activities that excite them and, from which, they may indeed learn. This paper will explore the impact on learning of a portfolio of mobile applications designed for their use outside the classroom. I conclude that the future is challenging but bright with respect to mobile application effect on learning a second language.

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