



Beyond the Classroom: Mobile Learning the Wider World

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Ken Beatty's paper raises very interesting and critical issues regarding MALL. Mobile applications are increasingly revolutionizing the way we do things and as educators, we can no longer overlook the impact of multi-media applications on learning. The paper highlights significant influences on language learning affecting the learners, educators, policy makers, and even employers. I find the paper very revealing and an eye opener to the realities of the impact of technological advancement on learning methodologies. It is clear that there are more questions than answers hence; thus, this is a timely discussion.

The main focus of the paper is on language learning – specifically mobile language learning. It highlights the gadgets that enable mobile language learning, such as laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. I wish to make a few observations regarding the paper. The first observation is that the paper is lacking necessary details at some points. Although the writer gives some examples of how various applications can aid language learning, one can't help feeling that he glosses over this aspect, yet one would expect it to be the core substance of the paper. I would have been happier if the author had provided more tangible data or excerpts that show what has been tested and tried instead of just giving examples in passing. The writer also tends to discuss language learning and learning in general interchangeably. This approach seems to waters down the idea of MALL, which the discussion should emphasize.

Secondly, the author of this paper has done a good job of focusing on portable gadgets that aid in language learning. The assumption is that the learner manages his or her own learning via these gadgets. Perhaps what the paper fails to point out is the fact that there is also language learning through these gadgets that is managed by the teacher, i.e., what is popularly described as e-learning. There is a need to draw the distinction because MALL is on another level, where the learner is more in control of the learning.

Thirdly, a minor but important point that could be highlighted in this paper is the aspect of environmental conservation. In the era of global campaign for a paperless operation, MALL can lead to major advancements in environmental protection. This component is a major advantage of MALL and hence is worthy of discussion.

Other Issues for Consideration

Mobile phones have various applications and we should consider how we could tap into these to enhance MALL. Examples are:

- Text messaging (what is the effect on formal language, language coding/interpretation, etc)?
- Other applications (e.g., mobile money banking, transfer, etc; buying and selling; chatting (is it time to come up with 'ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC MOBILE APPLICATION')?)
- Downloads (e.g., ring tones ideas could spread to grammatical structures or vocabulary items)
- Multilingual settings (e.g., how MALL can work in such contexts)
- Translation and digitalization of e-books
- Appropriateness of MALL for nomadic communities via mobile phones
- Internet connectivity



- Solar powered devices in places where there is no electricity

Possible Innovations/Considerations by TIRF

- Research is needed for practical solutions in managing MALL tests and exams
- Development of language learning materials specific to mobile learning
- Programs for persons with disabilities, such as visual or hearing impairments, (e.g., the Dolphin pen, sign language animations, podcasts and YouTube as delivery mechanisms, etc.)