

Chapter XXV

Portable MP3 Players for Oral Comprehension of a Foreign Language

Mahieddine Djoudi
Université de Poitiers, France

Saad Harous
University of Sharjah, UAE

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, we present an approach for mobile learning that aims at equipping learners by portable MP3 players. As known, the primary use of this device is to listen to music in MP3 format, but it can be adopted to be a useful tool for the service of teaching/learning of languages. This method is based on an easy to use technology that makes it possible for learners to work, at their own pace/rhythm, the oral comprehension of a foreign language. It is a question of supporting the personalization (but not only) of what audio files (short, long) each user should listen to. These files are created by the teacher and uploaded on a Web based distance-learning platform. So, these audio resources are available permanently on the server and can be downloaded by learners at any time. The proposed method is designed for a diversified population and allows the development and the maintenance of knowledge throughout the life.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we present an approach for mobile learners which aims at equipping learners with portable MP3 player. The primary use of this device is to listen to music in MP3

format, but it can be adopted to be a useful tool for the service of teaching/learning of languages. This method is based on an easy to use technology which makes it possible for learners to work, at their own pace/rhythm, the oral comprehension of a foreign language.

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The term mobile learning (mlearning) refers to the use of mobile and handheld information technology devices in teaching and learning. These mobile tools often travel with the learners (Kadyte & Akademi, 2003). Among these tools we can quote the telephone (Attewell & Savill-Smith, 2003), the PDA (Kneebone, 2003), Pocket PC (Holme & Sharples, 2002), the portable computer (Willis & Miertschin, 2004), the Portable MP3 Players (Bayon-Lopez, 2004), etc. Mobile technologies are transforming the educational world. The question is to know how these technologies affect the training environment, pedagogy, and continuing education (Mifsud, 2002).

According to Bryan (2004), mobile technologies and their adoption by the younger generations are going to transform the education itself. It is a question “of modeling learners as creative and communicating participants, rather than passive consumers,” and “to describe the world like a service on which one can read and write.” The article adopts a broad definition of mobility. It is interested in continuous connectivity, the dynamic combinations of wired and wireless devices, and learners and their environment (Bryan, 2004).

From recent but abundant work in the field of the mobile learning (Cohen & Wakeford, 2005; Keefe, 2003; Kossen, 2001; Lindroth, 2002; Pearson, 2002; Sharples, 2000; Vavoula, 2004), we can raise the following remarks:

- The reconfiguration of the classrooms and the campuses in reconfigurable open spaces, mixing physical presence and distant **collaboration**, seems to be one of the attractive prospects. There is no need any more to equip these spaces in a fixed way. Also, we do not need to limit the learners to a specific area because they are equipped with their own communication devices, the borders are pushed to the infinity
- The continuous co-operation, independent of the place, could transform the way in which research is undertaken on the ground or the training experiments are done. One can imagine dispersed teams which exchange and publish their results and analyses in real time
- Finally, the mlearning could become the way to follow in order to have a lifelong learning. In this approach, any person could, at any given place and time, choose a particular subject, find a learning community that is learning this topic. He/she can join this group for while and leave when his/her objectives are achieved

ANALYTICAL SCHEME OF LANGUAGE CAPACITIES

In order to understand the problem being considered in this chapter, it is of primary importance to know what are the capacities concerned during a learning process of a foreign language. We point out that the capacities in learning a language represent the various mental operations that have to be done by a listener, a reader, or a writer in an unconscious way, for example: to locate, discriminate, or process the data. One distinguishes in the analytical diagram, basic capacities which correspond to

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