# Chapter 34
# Using Mobile Technologies With Young Language Learners to Support and Promote Oral Language Production

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper examines how the use of mobile technologies such as tablets and handheld MP3 players can support and promote oral language production among young language learners. It explores how the use of these mobile technologies in the language classroom supports pedagogical practices anchored in socioconstructivist theories of SLA that emphasize the role of dialogue and social interaction among young language learners. The paper is based on a collaborative action research project involving French Immersion teachers and their students in primary schools in a western province of Canada. Findings show that the affordances of mobile technologies contribute to the creation of innovative learning environments and authentic language learning experiences that support and promote the production of oral language among young language learners. The inquiry demonstrates the adoption of second language pedagogical approaches anchored in socioconstructivist theories of SLA that promote autonomy and a sense of agency among language learners.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, publications in the field of CALL have provided a strong collective body of knowledge about how the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies promote interactive and communicative language learning experiences in and out of the classroom. More recent research has explored the potential of new mobile technological tools such as smartphones for creating new learning opportunities as well as new and rich learning environments for language learners (e.g., Godwin-Jones, 2011; Shrestha, 2012; Stockwell, 2010). Research on the use of mobile technologies (particularly smartphones) as learning

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tools has emphasized the characteristics and affordance of these technological devices (Stockwell, 2013). The potential benefits of such mobile technologies in the context of language learning are also aligned with those in other educational contexts. These potential benefits include the following:

*Accessibility* (access to learning opportunities, experts/mentors, other learners); *immediacy* (on-demand learning, real-time communication and data sharing, situated learning); *personalization* (bite-size learning on familiar devices; promotes active learning and a more personalized experience); and *intelligence* (advanced features make learning richer through context-aware features, data capture, multimedia) (Pouezevara, 2012).

Other new mobile technologies, such as tablets and handheld MP3 players, have also found their way into educational contexts, especially in primary classrooms across the United States and Canada, and their potential has been examined under similar lenses. The benefits of using these new devices are still considered to be based mainly on their possibilities in terms of *accessibility, immediacy,* and *intelligence* to young learners in and out of the classroom (Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012).

However, new literature on the use of mobile technologies is redirecting the goals of using these mobile and handheld devices for the purpose of learning. This new literature, which is based on pedagogical approaches informed by socioconstructivist theories of learning, is concerned with "[enabling] learner-generated content and learner-generated contexts" (Cochrane, 2011, p. 252). The new mobile technologies are allowing the creation of new environments that hold great potential for authentic interaction, communication, and collaboration, as well as the construction and sharing of new content, thanks to the affordances of the technologies themselves as suggested by Hartson (2003):

- Cognitive affordance;
- Physical affordance;
- Sensory affordance;
- Functional affordance.

Moreover, new mobile technologies such as tablets and MP3 players have more enhanced hardware and OS capacities than any previous computers could offer, including new advanced built-in functionalities such as video cameras and voice recognition, as well as access to online software programs known as *apps* (short for "applications"). Voice recognition and other features such as audio and video recording and editing make it possible for learners to create new learning environments that were not available previously on personal computers such as laptops (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

The adoption of these emergent mobile technologies in the language classroom also has the potential for engaging language learners in creating their own content and in producing authentic language output through multimedia texts that include sounds and voice in the target language. The importance for students to generate their own output is well supported in the socioconstructivist second language acquisition (SLA) theoretical framework, which emphasized the need for oral language production through authentic dialogue, social interaction, and collaboration (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Finally, these new devices have demonstrated potential for new pedagogical directions in CALL that would allow greater opportunities for students to produce their own language content in the target language and to create their own language learning experiences. These mobile devices have the potential to support and promote the production of language output, and to contribute to the development of learning experiences that foster peer scaffolding and engagement of the learners in a metalinguistic awareness process that is crucial to the development of language competencies in a second language (Swain, 1998).