

Chapter 50

Mobile Assisted Language Learning Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the benefits of learning with mobile technology for TESOL students and to explore their perceptions of learning with this type of technology. The study provided valuable insights on how students perceive and adapt to learning with mobile technology for effective learning experiences for both students and teachers. The authors conducted a convergent mixed methods design to achieve the research objectives. Three critical and practical recommendations for effective mobile learning experiences were scrutinized for design and implementation of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL): effective instructional strategies, training or professional workshop development, and ongoing technical support and assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Although many educators (e.g., classroom teachers and facilitators) already use technology in their classrooms, they must keep up with students' desires to study anywhere and anytime. Recently, advanced mobile devices with Wi-Fi have become widely accessible, more usable and attractive for both teachers and students (e.g., Cochrane, 2010; Martin & Ertzberger, 2013; Wu et al., 2012) due to their convenient and flexible use. Researchers have found that mobile technologies have the potential to provide new learning experiences for students in teacher education (Baran, 2014). Similarly, mobile devices including mobile phones have been found to be attractive learning tools for language learners (e.g., Chen, 2013; de Jong, Specht, & Koper, 2010; Ducate & Lomicka, 2013; Hsu, Hwang, & Chang, 2013; Hwang &

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Chang, 2011; Lu, 2008). Kukulska-Hulme (2009) explained that students' use of personal mobile devices affords their ownership of learning and increased learning opportunities, which may lead to positive language learning experiences.

However, innovation in technology-based language education such as mobile-assisted learning continues to challenge teachers to develop learning activities that enhance student engagement and learning. Although the benefits of mobile technology use are widely acknowledged, it remains unclear how to most effectively integrate mobile technology into learning activities in classrooms due to a lack of teacher support and training (Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Gedik et al., 2012; O'Bannon & Thomas, 2014). In addition, researchers have focused particularly on the benefits of mobile technology use rather than on providing emerging pedagogical directions for effective mobile learning experiences for language teachers.

This study builds upon an earlier study by Kim et al. (2013), in which they investigated how 53 students enrolled in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program perceived the use of mobile devices to complete class projects such as accessing mobile content including YouTube videos. That study focused particularly on surveying participants' usage and provided a quantitative point of view of what students could do with mobile devices in terms of mobile learning outside of the classroom. The preliminary findings reinforced Stockwell's comments (2008, 2010) that technological, pedagogical, psychological, or even environmental barriers often prevent learners from selecting mobile devices, even when they have a positive view of mobile learning.

A qualitative case study approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008) supplemented with quantitative results to develop a holistic picture of phenomena related to mobile learning is utilized in this paper to investigate the topic of mobile learning (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2003). The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into how students/future language teachers perceive and adapt to learning with mobile technology as well as offer practical guidance to teachers in supporting student learning both in and outside of the classroom.

In this study, we explore the benefits as well as concerns of learning with mobile technology in terms of pedagogical implications for effective learning experience for teachers in order to facilitate mobile learning experiences. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do TESOL students perceive their mobile learning experiences following each class project?
2. What are their suggestions to improve learning with mobile technology?

METHODOLOGY

A case study (Yin, 2003) design was used to describe and interpret TESOL students' mobile learning experiences as well as provide recommendations that guide teachers in supporting student learning with mobile technology both in and outside of the classroom. Three instruments were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data: a pre-study survey, student reflections for each class project, and a post-study survey as shown in Figure 1.

All participants were required to complete the pre-study survey, which was administered one week prior to the beginning of the study. After finishing each class project, all students were required to complete a student reflection as a separate assignment. Approximately one week after all projects were completed, a post-study survey was administered.

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