

Chapter 14

iPad and iPod in the Language Classrooms: New Learning Environments and Learning Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The chapter examines how the use of emergent mobile technologies such as iPad and iPod in the classroom with young language learners can promote innovative learning environments and authentic oral language learning experiences. The chapter is based on a collaborative action research (CAR) project involving young French language learners in primary schools in a western province of Canada. Findings show that the affordances of mobile technologies support the creation of innovative learning environments and authentic oral language learning experiences through collaborative dialogue and peer-peer scaffolding among young language learners. The outcomes of the inquiry also demonstrate that the use of mobile devices such as iPad and iPod promotes the emergence of metacognitive reflection among learners, as well as a greater sense of agency and autonomy.

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 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., Burston, 2013, 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Shrestha, 2012; Stockwell, 2013). The potential benefits of these mobile technologies have been described as the following: *accessibility, immediacy, personalization, and intelligence* (Pouezevara, 2012).

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Although research on MALL (mobile assisted language learning) has mainly been concerned with the use of smartphones (Burston, 2015), other new mobile technologies, such as iPad and iPod, have also found their way into educational contexts, especially in primary and secondary classrooms across the United States, Canada, Asia, and some parts of Europe, and their potential has also 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 in the classroom. 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 (Pellerin, 2014), as well as the construction and sharing of new content, thanks to the affordances of the technologies themselves: *cognitive affordance*, *physical affordance*, *sensory affordance*, and *functional affordance* (Hartson, 2003).

New mobile technologies such as smartphones, iPad, and iPod offer new and 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”). These new affordances, 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, 2015).

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 oral language output through multimedia texts that include sounds, animation, and voice (Godwin-Jones, 2015; Pellerin, 2014). The importance for students to generate their own output is well supported in the socioconstructivist second language acquisition (SLA) theoretical framework, which emphasizes the need for oral language production through authentic dialogue, social interaction, and collaboration (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Pellerin, 2015).

Finally, these new technological devices have demonstrated potential for adopting innovative pedagogical approaches informed by neuroscience (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) 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 emergent mobile tools have the potential not only to support and promote the production of authentic language output, but also to contribute to the development of learning experiences that foster collaborative dialogue, peer scaffolding, and engagement of the learners in a metalinguistic reflection process that is crucial to the development of language competencies in a second language (Swain, 2006).

This paper examines how the use of emergent mobile technologies such as iPad and iPod can foster innovative learning environments and language learning experiences that support and promote the authentic production of oral language among young language learners. In particular, it explores how the use of these devices supports innovative pedagogical practices that are informed by neurocognitive scientific findings about *how we learn*, and that are anchored in socioconstructivist theories of SLA that emphasize the role of collaborative dialogue, peer scaffolding, and metacognitive reflection.

The outcomes presented here are part of a larger inquiry that is concerned with the use of mobile technologies in creating new learning environments and language learning experiences for young French language learners in French Immersion programs in a majority-Anglophone province in western Canada.

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