



Designer Learning: The Teacher as Designer of Mobile-based Classroom Learning Experiences

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Nicky Hockly's work in technology enhanced and supported language teaching practice is well known, since she has been influencing practitioners' thinking about how to integrate new technology into their teaching for some time. This paper is both exciting and intriguing, as she takes things further by underpinning her thinking through experimentation in her own classroom using an action research-oriented (AR) approach. Her focus is how to embed mobile-based communicative tasks into the learning experiences of two groups of learners.

Of particular interest is the selection and sequencing of appropriate MALL tasks in a situation where she was required to use a course book and also teach students enrolled in the class for very short periods of time (an experience not uncommon to many teachers working in international language centres). Although, as she says herself, the duration and scope of her AR is limited to a brief period of two weeks, it allowed her to respond to the volatile teaching situation she worked in and also to begin establishing some valuable insights for MALL task selection and sequencing. The six parameters she mentioned would be a great starting place as a framework for other teacher researchers to investigate MALL practices.

Nicky's research echoes some of the action research experimentation carried out by Australian teachers with whom I've worked over the last four years. Sponsored by English Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment (see: <http://www.englishaustralia.com.au/action-research-program>), several of them have been exploring the potential of Web 2.0 and MALL technologies to enhance their students' learning, particularly in developing speaking skills and providing formative assessment. The accounts of their research, and of other teachers using action research (but not necessarily for MALL) may be useful for those teachers who want to pursue either (or both) of these directions for classroom investigation (See *Research Notes*, 44, 48 and 53 and more to come: <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/research-and-validation/published-research/research-notes/>.)

Nicky's paper, as well as the four others TIRF has just published, shows that MALL is set to revolutionize the extension of learning within and beyond the confines of the classroom. MALL enables teachers and learners to engage in 'boundary crossing', opening up to productive ways to personalize routes for learning, and offering endless possibilities for creativity in how, when, and where learning takes place. Yet, one of the possible threats of MALL could be 'any how' learning, so TIRF is taking an important direction in facilitating research that develops sound principles for creating mobile learning opportunities. Papers like Nicky's also demonstrate the kinds of practices that are underpinned by effective principles.

One important point made in Nicky's paper is the need to take these practices beyond the localised 'micro' work of individual teachers, important as this work is. A possible direction for TIRF is to encourage research that shows how MALL can be embedded at more 'macro' levels, institutionally, or even at broader policy levels.

Apart from the importance of research, conceptualizations of teacher education also need to take into account the rapid changes brought about by MALL and to assist teachers to become the technopedagogues of the future, as referred to in Nicky's paper. Exciting opportunities lie ahead for language practitioners who are prepared to use their classrooms as laboratories for experimentation



that deepens knowledge about and creates new designs for successful language learning. In this respect, Nicky's paper clearly demonstrates the potential of action research to do just that.