



Some Emerging Principles for Mobile-assisted Language Learning

Glenn Stockwell, Professor, Waseda University

Philip Hubbard, Senior Lecturer and Director of English for Foreign Students, Stanford University
Language Center

Discussant: Tarana Patel, Founder & Educator, learnEd, India

Stockwell and Hubbard provide an informative and up-to-date Stockwell and Hubbard survey of CALL and MALL literature with relevant examples to explain issues affecting the application of MALL. The comprehensive literature review sets a strong foundation and for further research in MALL, making the paper an important reference point. Finally, the ten principles drawn to help educators design MALL activities effectively seem to be a well thought out practical guide or checklist for any MALL practitioner. I can see myself referring to the principles as they are inclusive and specific, but they also have room for adjustment and interpretation, depending on the context MALL is applied.

The key issues and insights for MALL and CALL discussed in this paper provide useful and thought-provoking ideas for educators. In my view, economic and socio-economic factors may be an additional dimension to the physical, pedagogical, and psycho-social domains affecting effective integration of MALL in learning environments. In my teaching experiences in China and India, though there was the potential to apply mobile technology in my classrooms, several students had outdated devices or were not able to afford one. In such cases, it would be interesting to explore other possibilities – e.g., how MALL activities can be tailored to be a hybrid of computer-based, book/paper-supported, and mobile-based.

In my view, the future of MALL involves many positive applications and outcomes to support successful language learning. Smart phone technology in itself suggests a learning experience. Starting with how to use the smart phone to learning how to use the various Apps that are available in the App marketplace, a smart phone user is pushed to explore and learn every day. This effect that smart phones have on their users in general – the motivation to learn and to be a part of a hi-tech community – can feed in to MALL experiences that provide real-life and learner-oriented education.

India is a great context in which to observe mobile technology in action in various scenarios. I have noticed that many educational institutions in India already use the SMS system to send out notifications to students. With minimal fees paid for texting services and a still developing broadband internet availability, SMS or *What'sapp*, as also suggested by the authors, can be an easy launch pad for MALL tasks. With the Apps technology growing at lightning speed, I can foresee mobile technology becoming one of the main learning platforms in education with surveys, assessments, grade records, voice recording, classroom management, and more done through mobile apps.

India has the largest number of mobile phone users and the most affordable mobile usage plans in the world. MALL has already positively affected the possibilities a person in India can have with limited resources and in a geographical area with limited access to schools. For example, EnglishOnMobile.in is a mobile technology company that provides daily SMS lessons in English at a nominal cost. Though the effectiveness of this service needs to be documented, it seems to be a learning option for those who may not otherwise have any access to English learning. Moreover, the Indian Government has launched several ways of educating and reaching the rural area populations for health care and education through



mobile technology (Source: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=85669>).

Some of my favorite smartphone applications seem to have already set a trend for how learning experiences could include MALL. These apps provide a complete user experience starting with a user-friendly interface to the possibility of saving and compiling information within the application. In addition to the more obvious MALL applications, such as Dictionary, Weather, or chat apps, here are some favorites from a long list that stand out as trendsetters in MALL, from my viewpoint. Needless to say, there are many more apps and possibilities for applying them in various learning contexts.

- Flipboard – news
- Blurb – photo stories
- Yelp or Citysearch – research tasks and review writing
- Everyday.Me. – journaling

MALL is a growing area with vast potential. There seems to be an expanding body of resources available for using MALL in language education. However, the authenticity of applying what is learned and the authenticity of students' interest and motivation in a topic may make a MALL activity successful or ineffective. Another important factor for the effectiveness of MALL is the limitations in technology and the environment (Principle 1). Supporting further research and resources for a MALL activities guide in various contexts while keeping these factors in mind, may be one area that TIRF can support more work in.

I was particularly interested in this paper because I specialized in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as a part of her MATESOL studies at the Monterey Institute. I worked as the CALL Coordinator at the University of California, Riverside International Education Programs, where my key responsibilities included training students and teachers to take advantage of the growing internet resources and language software for enhancing language learning. Since 2010, I have focused on working with schools and colleges in India to design communicative English language programs to prepare students for the job market and train them with better communication skills in English. Access to the internet has been limited in most cases in India, but instructors working with me have made casual uses of mobile technology to connect with and motivate students to learn. Facebook posts for discussions, browser-based research, SMS notifications, and conference calling are the main ways mobile technology has been applied for language learning for my programs in India. With limited broadband cable internet access in India, mobile phones give the fastest access to the internet. For these reasons, I am deeply interested in generating creative applications of internet resources for curriculum design, teaching materials, and student learning. In this regard, MALL is very promising.