

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue from the IATEFL 2012 Pre-Conference Event on Mobile Learning

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Welcome to the September Special Issue of the International Journal of Computer Assisted Language Learning and Teaching. This issue is based on presentations made at the Learning Technologies Special Interest Group Pre-Conference Event (PCE) of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (LTSIG IATEFL). This event was held on 19th March, 2012 in Glasgow as a precursor to IATEFL's annual conference. These PCEs have been running for some considerable time now and are a successful lead in to the main event. They are designed to be a focused day on particular issues in the field. We reported on an earlier PCE in Volume 1 Issue 2 of IJCALLT where we focused on the increasing adoption of Web 2.0 technologies and this year the topic was mobile learning, arguably a rapidly growing area of interest for many teachers, learners and producers of learning materials. I am aware of two other journals that are planning on similar focused issues and am also aware of a number of planned books in this area. The PCE was very popular with over 80 attendees and featured the following main presentations:

- Gavin Dudeney—What is Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and what can be done?
- Gary Motteram & Eileen Murphy—MALL & Teacher Education (<http://bit.ly/Alp-gUb>)
- Paul Sweeney—App Snap! 20 Apps in 30 Minutes
- Caroline Moore—The Story of an App
- Neil Ballantyne—Mobile Learning Across the Pyramid

You can find more detail on the LTSIG website: <http://ltsig.org.uk/>

These presentations were then followed by a number of short exemplars of practice in a Show and Tell:

- Tom Ottway, University of Sussex—LingoBee: a mobile app for vocabulary development
- Vicky Sawmill—Mobile browsers for group work
- Jintendra Singh, India—QR codes
- Mabel Castra, Brazil—Each school in the group she works for has a branch set of

iPads and they use them as a replacement for computer labs

- Richard Turnbull—An intranet for a group of schools to build a community amongst the schools
- Bruno Andrade—Managing school issues like bullying using mobile

As you can see the range of topics was very broad and following the PCE in the main conference mobile learning was a regular focus amongst the presentations. I predict that in Liverpool at the next IATEFL Conference there will be even more emphasis on issues mobile.

From the PCE came three papers and a fourth was requested from Prithvi Sreshtha who had been planning to present, but in the end was unable to make it because of prior commitments. I asked Prithvi especially because I felt his paper gave a good balance to the themes in this special issue of the journal.

Therefore, we have a paper by Paul Sweeney and Caroline Moore, “Mobile Apps for Learning Vocabulary: Categories, Evaluation and Design Criteria for Teachers and Developers,” which explores some of the background to app development, reviews the state of apps currently on the market and presents a set of criteria that can be used by app producers to judge whether their apps are meeting good development standards. The article then goes on to look at two cases studies of vocabulary apps: one that is the repurposing of current materials, a common activity for publishers, and the second is development of an app from scratch. The apps are both targeted at younger learners. These apps are then reviewed against the criteria set.

The next article by Rebecca Adlard, Tom Ottway, and Emma Proctor-Legg, “Crowd-Sourcing with the LingoBee App: A Study in Facilitating Pollination across Language and Culture in Self-Directed Learning” looks at another vocabulary app that has been created, this time, in the context of higher education.

This is a trial of the app with groups of students in two university contexts exploring whether and how the students made use of the app in and outside of their classrooms.

The third article by Prithvi Sreshtha, “Teacher Professional Development Using Mobile Technologies in a Large-Scale Project: Lessons Learned from Bangladesh,” takes us back to the younger learner classroom, but this time in Bangladesh and with a particular focus on teacher education and their use of different mobile devices to promote both the teachers’ language, but also to develop their understanding of communicative language teaching. This article reports on one part of a large development project and shows how technology appropriately used can have an impact in the developing world.

The final article by Paul Driver, “Pervasive Games and Mobile Technologies for Embodied Language Learning,” takes us to Portugal, but this time the technologies that are used are to encourage language learning out of the classroom box and into the streets of a Portuguese city where the learners play games that encourage them to make use of language, record it and bring it back to the classroom for presentation and analysis.

My thanks go to all of the people who helped organise the PCE, particularly those from the LTSIG Committee: Graham Stanley (Co-ordinator), Nicky Hockly and Paul Sweeney and to IATEFL Head office without whom no event would get off the ground and to the paper writers included in this issue who responded positively to the initial request for papers and who engaged with me as editor to produce what I believe is an interesting contribution to the growing debate on MALL.

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