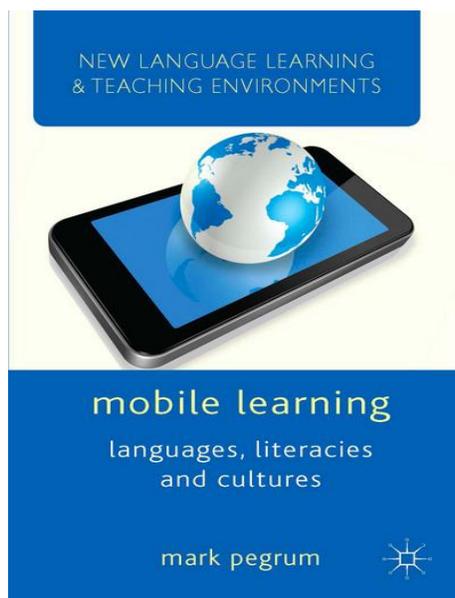Book Review

Mobile Learning: languages, literacies and cultures

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The book in question presents a comprehensive overview of mobile learning in the current global educational scenario and is suitable for the researchers, educational technologists and the people who are in the filed of mobile assisted language learning. The volume consists of seven logically sequenced chapters covering the theoretical, practical and methodological implication of m-learning. The book offers two main features, allowing the book to offer more practical and beneficial features than a large number of other books on the topic available in the market do: first it provides insight into the potential and problems in the use of mobile devices in the classroom in a large number of contexts across the globe, which makes the book valuable for

a broader audience. The author offers vignettes, case studies and research from almost all the continents; secondly, unlike many other books on the topic, it encompasses the pedagogical issues in relation to m-learning. The author illustrates how language and literacy teaching through mobile learning could be facilitated more effectively. In the final section, the author discusses the prospects of mobile technology in education and the role of "digitally trained educators". The book can be divided into three sections. The first section (Chapter 1, 2 and 7) discusses the theoretical background and future implications of m-learning. The second section (Chapter 3) deals with the technical aspects of m-learning in the education sector, whereas the third section (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) elaborates on the pedagogical aspects of mobile learning.

Theory and practical challenges

The first section outlines the shift from e-learning to m-learning, and maintains that the latter is enjoying wider approval due to its availability as well as affordability for a greater number of people. The author highlights the major difference between fixed technologies of e-learning and mobile technologies where the former is inclined to be detached from everyday life, whereas the latter is more likely to become a part of users' real life experiences. The author also mentions that mobile devices potentially establish closer links between the individual and society, between local and global perspectives as well as between the *episodic* nature of m-learning and "*extended* learning over time", because mobile devices allow a consistently ongoing learning experience in the background – "and sometimes, episodically, in the foreground". He emphasizes that it is not only the mobility of devices, but also the mobility of the learner as well as learning experience that is significant in an m-learning event. However, being a theoretically young field, m-learning needs to be observant of the real-world experiences for enhanced insight, both in theory and practice.

The author maintains that new technologies can potentially be more helpful for educators to train learners for the 21st century scenario than the 20th-century models of educations. However, he observes, that sensitivity to local context is imperative In order to benefit from the potentials of innovative technologies in the classroom. Therefore, one of the important objectives of m-learning should be developing 21st century skills by encouraging innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and teamwork autonomy and flexibility, and lifelong learning". The author continues that affordability of mobile devices may open new opportunities for marginalized communities who are culturally, socially, economically or religiously at disadvantaged positions, in order to correct social injustices among various communities in society.

The books establishes that considering the future needs of an m-class, modern teachers will need to be digitally trained, having *technological content knowledge* (TCK) in addition to content and pedagogical knowledge. It also logically calls for digitally trained leaders to successfully implement the digital implications. Only digitally literate and trained teachers can "turn students from *tech-comfy* into *tech-savvy* users of mobile and other tools*"*. The advent of technology in education also paves the way for professional training to be planned on such lines as to allow teachers to join digital networking, which would eventually lead to developing a personal learning network for each individual.

Technological Aspects

Thanks to the spread of mobile technology, a vast variety of mobile devices ranging from mobile phones USB drivers and digital pens are available on the market. The author divides these mobile devices into pre-smart and smart devices. The author refers to research which shows that depending on the context, the affordability and affordance, pre-smart devices have proven their potential in a number of Asian and African countries where simple text messaging via a basic featured mobile phone was used for numerous educational purposes. Regarding smart devices, he points out that in addition to smart phones, iPads and tablets have increasingly gained popularity, replacing personal computers (Meeker and Wu, 2013). In this regard, the book gives apt and practical suggestions regarding the use of technological hardware in an educational setting. Though all of the technological devices have great potential for educational benefits, the author advises that technology should not be used for technology's sake, as it may not necessarily lead to educational benefits. Another important point made by the author regarding the use of mobile devices in the classroom is that the affordance of technological devices must be used with a pedagogically informed approach. It means that educators should not depend on a single piece of hardware, particularly if it is a ''single-function device''.

In this section, the author also gives a brief history of connectivity starting from 1G to today's 4G networks. The author also describes how, with the advent of smart devices, numerous platforms for applications emerged where each platform has its own utility and limitation depending on the context, popularity of the relevant device/s and the functionality as well as accessibility of the application by its users. The volume also discusses genuine concerns regarding the use of mobile devices. The major problem is with the design of the hardware itself, which is not designed for educational purpose which poses a big challenge when it is used in an educational setting. Another major concern is that of health and environmental questions, with little research in the area. The author also refers to other issues such as limited input option, small screens of mobile phones, limited environment adaptability, limited storage and export options etc. which need to be addressed while planning for m-learning supported sessions. However, the section on the topic does not provide any clear solutions to these problems.

Pedagogical approach and m-learning

Discussion on the pedagogical aspects in mobile learning is the most beneficial part of the book, which not only gives an overview of strategic possibilities and potentials of incorporating technology in the curriculum, but also provides inexperienced teachers with insight into m-learning in various scenarios. The author highlights that in recent times mobile learning was hugely influenced by cognitive learning with a communicative approach to language performance. Mobile learning incorporated the notions of comprehensible input of a higher level, noticing new learning items, negotiation of meaning and risk taking in the language learning process. The author gives a succinct historical account of approaches used in language learning, concluding, that in current times ''language teaching typically draws on eclectic combinations of older approaches and methods alongside newer ones, but with the emphasis on meaningful communication within a sociocultural framework'' (p. 93). However, incorporating a cognitive approach does not diminish certain challenges, such as accessibility among different apps, differences in reading online/offline, and on mobile devices etc., put forth by m-learning. However, the author argues, that mobile devices potentially offer a wider variety of learning contents with greater possibilities of manipulating materials layered around the contents. Podcast

and vodcast have been used with greater advantages in academic contexts in various universities. Multimedia can be effectively used to ''develop coherent verbal and visual representations'' in learners' minds. The use of multimedia is also advantageous for providing a contextualized spoken language with boarder awareness of sociocultural awareness.   After discussing the potential of MALL for content, tutorial, communication and creation, the chapter discusses the potential of MALL for various modes of assessment. The book gives a brief account of how MALL offers individualized, quick and constant ongoing feedback with the possibility of building a progress log of each learner. Like any summative assessment task in a traditional learning scenario, MALL teachers might have various modes of assessment including typical quizzes and exams, with caution though. It is vital to consider if informal personalized learning can be directly assessed in a formal and general setting.

On the question of what language to teach, one of the fundamental issues is textspeak, which is hugely criticized by the critics of mobile earning. The author quotes Kemp (2011) to support that there is a positive correlation between the use of textspeak and standard literate language, which can be manipulated effectively in the academic context. The author claims that learners generally having an understanding of textspeak and standard language, break rules on purpose and hence they can devise rules of their own. The author also puts the responsibility on educators to determine where to allow textspeak and where not. Though this is a wise strategy, it is ambitious in the sense that it seems to put extra responsibility on educators, who might well be the product of and influenced by textspeak and its 'appropriate' use. The book advocates the use of textspeak but the author does not give concrete answers to this fundamental problem. The MALL approach makes a shift of skills in a different mode. For example, reading online is unique as compared to reading from a book which emphasizes that educators are aware of new dimensions of reading which is simultaneously linked with and separate from writings skills. The author discusses in details how grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking and listening skills can be taught through MALL in addition to teaching materials with integrated skills. The author refers to a number of approaches/projects (e.g. CAMCLL in China, MASELTOV in Europe & LOCH in Japan), which are likely to influence the way languages are learned under MALL.

The final part of the section on pedagogical approaches to m-learning expands on how successful projects in various parts of the world are in progress on multimodal literacy, code literacy, information literacy and other types of literacies, in addition to reading, writing and arithmetical literacies. Among these, code literacy is important, as the author notes that it helps in developing an appreciation of incorporating new and old approaches to learning in order to benefit the deprived populations of society. OLPC (One laptop Per Child) is one of such projects in progress in Australia that focuses on numeracy development, digital literacy and other notable literacies. The author rightly emphasizes that well trained teachers are required to explore the advantages and disadvantages of M-learning and MALL to design and implement mobile education. Support of educational policymakers, leaders and researchers is also inevitable to help teachers generate successful stories. A detailed account of these strategies has been made in the final chapter of the book, preparing for mobile education in the future.

The book is useful for a variety of audiences ranging from people with no background in m-learning and who would like to develop awareness in this area, to practicing teachers and researchers, in order to guide them on progressing further in the direction.

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