The L120 Mobile Project

Conference Item

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The L120 Mobile Project

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Introduction

• Languages at the Open University
  – Distance learning
  – Tutor supported
• L120 and Blended learning
  – Printed material
  – DVD-ROMs
  – Asynchronous online activities
  – Online and Face-to-face tutorials
  – Assessments (oral & written)
The project

• 2 groups of 35 students
  - Group 1: iPods or MP3 players (listening)
  - Group 2: mobile phones and Learnosity (interactive speaking activities)
• Over 6 weeks
  - 6 online questionnaires
  - audio feedback on activities for group 2
Objectives & Outcomes

• What are the contexts in which students engage in ‘mobile’ activities?
• How often do students engage in mobile activities and how long do they spend on them?
• What aspect or what type of activities do they find most or less beneficial and why?
• to evaluate the benefits of providing our students with mobile listening and speaking activities
• to understand better how to integrate interactive activities with mobile technologies into our courses
• to integrate mobile speaking activities (if appropriate) in the design of new courses
Group 1

- **Type of activity**
  - a variety of audio clips
  - no question or activity linked
  - reinforcement

- **Participation**

![Participation rate - Group 1 (from questionnaires)](image-url)
Group 2

- Type of activities: listening, oral presentations, pronunciation or grammar drills and dialogues
- Example
- Participation

Participation rate - Group 2 (from questionnaires)
So where did they do it?

**Group 1**

Where did you listen to L120 audio clips using your device? (Tick all that apply)

- At home
- On public transport
- In your car
- Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>At home</th>
<th>On public transport</th>
<th>In your car</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Group 2**

Where did you do the L120 speaking activities using your device?

- At home
- On public transport
- In your car
- Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>At home</th>
<th>On public transport</th>
<th>In your car</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Group 1
How often have you used your device to listen to L120 audio clips?

Group 2
How often have you used your device to do the speaking activities?
So did Group 1 find it useful?

In relation with your studies on L120, how do you rate the usefulness of listening to L120 audio clips on mobile devices?

- Extremely useful: 42.9%
- Very useful: 42.9%
- Useful: 14.3%
- Not very useful: 14.3%
- Not useful at all: 14.3%
- Don’t know: 14.3%
Which aspect did Group 1 find most useful?

In listening to the audio clips on your device, which aspect did you find most useful? Group 1 week 1

![Graph showing the aspects found most useful by Group 1. The x-axis includes Practising general listening skills, Practising understanding and/or recognising grammatical points, Improving vocabulary, Helping towards intonation and pronunciation. The y-axis represents the level of usefulness: very useful, useful, fairly useful, and Not useful at all. The graph indicates that Practising general listening skills and Improving vocabulary were rated highly useful, with Practising general listening skills being rated as very useful.]

- Practising general listening skills
- Understanding and/or recognising grammatical points
- Improving vocabulary
- Helping towards intonation and pronunciation
What did Group 2 like?

- Additional practice on pronunciation and grammar provided prompts/answers were short and it did not rely too much on memory
- The challenge (being stretched) & the ‘authentic’ aspect
- The potential to complement the DVD-ROM or the other course materials
What did Group 2 not like?

• Lack of sample/model answers in the review mode
• Issues around sound quality and functionality
• The high level of difficulty:
  - relying too much on memory
  - relying too much on course material content
  - hard to understand
### Reasons for dropping out

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work/life pressure</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty of content</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Didn't meet expect.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound quality</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't receive info</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study pressure (L120)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionality</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No new content</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped out of L120</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Possible practical applications

- Encouraging the use of iPods and MP3 players for listening practise
- Standalone repetition activities (pronunciation/intonation)
- Follow-up activities (complementing other medium such as DVD-ROM) focusing on practising grammar or oral skills in general such as grammar drills, dialogues and short oral presentations
- Approaching listening differently (developing memory and comprehension as well as immediate response)
Lessons learned

• Don’t assume that even basic technology is easy to master
• Don’t forget that the sound quality so important in listening and speaking skills might be an issue on mobile phones
• Match content with the medium and its functionality (including its limitations)
• Educate the students to the potential of approaching listening and speaking skills in a less supported way. (lack of visual can help with listening skills)
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