The L120 Mobile Project

Conference or Workshop Item

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The L120 Mobile Project

Valérie Demouy, Annie Eardley, Agnes Kukulska-Hulme and Rhodri Thomas
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)
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

**Group 2**
Where did you do the L120 speaking activities using your device?

- At home
- On public transport
- In your car
- Other
How often have you used your device to listen to L120 audio clips?

Group 1

How often have you used your device to do the speaking activities?

Group 2
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
- Not useful at all
- Don’t know
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

- Practising general listening skills
- Understanding and/or recognising grammatical points
- Improving vocabulary
- Helping towards intonation and pronunciation

- Practising general understanding and/or recognising grammatical points

- Improving vocabulary
- Helping towards intonation and pronunciation

- Not useful at all

- Very useful
- Useful
- Fairly useful

Bar chart showing the distribution of ratings for each aspect.
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

- Work/life pressure: 4
- Technical: 2
- Difficulty of content: 3
- Cost: 6
- Didn't meet expectations: 2
- Sound quality: 4
- Didn't receive info: 1
- Study pressure (L120): 7
- Functionality: 3
- No new content: 2
- Dropped out of L120: 2
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)
Contacts

• Valérie Demouy (Lecturer in French - Department of Languages) v.e.demouy@open.ac.uk
• Annie Eardley (Senior Lecturer - Department of Languages) a.f.eardley@open.ac.uk
• Agnes Kukulska-Hulme (Professor of Learning Technology and Communication – Institute of Educational Technology) a.m.kukulska-hulme@open.ac.uk
• Rhodri Thomas (Senior Project Manager - Learning Innovation Office) rhodri.thomas@open.ac.uk