Chapter 41

Socrative:
Using Mobile Devices to Promote Language Learning

Sandra Vieira Vasconcelos
Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Ana Balula
University of Aveiro, Portugal

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the use mobile devices to promote language learning, this chapter documents the use of the student response system Socrative in two German courses taking place at two different Portuguese higher education institutions. It is divided into three different sections. After establishing the project's theoretical framework, the authors analyse its implementation and present findings, based on users' perceptions and test results. Aiming at understanding the role mobile devices can play in promoting students' long-term content retention, this research achieved promising results, not only by confirming students' expectations towards mlearning, but also by suggesting that mobile initiatives can have a positive effect in motivating students and promoting engagement, change and innovation. Overall, students achieved positive results, with data providing educators with indicators and insights on learner's learning strategies and progress.

INTRODUCTION

In 2007 Traxler predicted that "mobile education, however innovative, technically feasible, and pedagogically sound, may have no chance of sustained, wide-scale institutional deployment in higher education in the foreseeable future" (Traxler, 2007, p. 20). Referring to the pivotal role of structure and institutional organization, Traxler also noted that despite its potential, mobile learning (mlearning) was still emerging, and its implementation faced many obstacles, lacking support and sound research. However, since then, much has changed, and mlearning has become a pivotal area in education.

The expansion of mobile and wireless technologies and their growing ubiquity and pervasiveness have turned mobile devices into valuable teaching/learning tools, appealing not only to students but also to institutions. With recent studies suggesting that "students prefer courses with some online components" (Dahlstrom, 2012, p. 7), the education system, and particularly higher education institutions are challenged to "cater for the new generations of learners who use mobile technology for a variety of activities including accessing just in time information and interacting with peers" (Palalas, 2013, p. 2). As a result, there is a growing emphasis on giving students the possibility to study anytime, anyplace and at their own convenience through their mobile devices.

These changes have had a significant and widespread impact in different areas, including language learning. Over the last decade there has been a growing interest surrounding Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which has resulted in different studies and projects involving mobile technologies. Mobile devices and apps are reshaping the way people learn foreign languages. This change has happened at many different levels, not only in self-study and independent courses, but also in traditional classroom settings. In this chapter we describe a project that combines the use of a digital platform and mobile devices to promote foreign language teaching within a higher education context.

Focusing on two beginner courses of German as a Foreign Language taking place at two different Portuguese higher education institutions and working with the interactive, real time, web-based response system tool Socrative, we set out to document and analyze the role these devices can play in enhancing students' experiences by empowering them and influencing their learning.

Socrative is a free web 2.0 tool that gives instructors the possibility to promote both formal and informal engagement in the classroom by using students' mobile devices. After registering and creating a "teacher account," the instructor can create multiple quizzes that can be accessed by students in class, using any mobile device with a web browser and Internet access. The platform's different settings make it possible to create multiple choice and true/false exercises as well as short answer questions. Instructors can check students' response in real time. In classroom contexts, the quiz results allow instructors to discuss whole class results instantly, and the platform also allows instructors to formatively assess students' progress and pinpoint problematic areas. Results can be downloaded and data analyzed at any time. Based on those results, instructors can determine whether the class is struggling with a particular topic and can review or reinforce specific content. Additionally, instructors can also provide self-paced quizzes where students are given an extended period of time to answer a set of pre-planned questions. The platform also allows quizzes to be staged as competitive games and polls as the platform turns the mobile devices into clickers.

In addition to assessing students' perceptions towards the use of mobile devices for learning foreign languages, our study consisted of creating different weekly quizzes that covered different units of the syllabus over one semester. Each quiz included different questions on subjects that had been worked on up until that moment. Each student would anonymously access and answer the quiz at the end of the lesson. The anonymized and aggregated results were then discussed in class, giving students the opportunity to review their progress. Later, the identified results were also analyzed by the teachers to determine problem areas and to understand the impact of the tests on students' learning, self-correction and overall engagement.

The data for this study were collected by a mixed methods approach combining a qualitative and quantitative data collection process based on questionnaires, classroom observation and test results. These data have allowed us to conclude that even though students are not used to using mobile devices in formal learning settings, they are open and motivated to try them. The preliminary findings have also

Related Content

How Much "Translation" Is in Localization and Global Adaptation?: Exploring Complex Intersemiotic Action on the Grounds of Skopos Theory as a Conceptual Framework
Olaf Immanuel Seel (2021). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/how-much-translation-is-in-localization-and-global-adaptation/281669

Examining L2 Learners' Use of Engagement Strategies in Telecollaborative Written Interactions
Ana Oskoz, Ana Gimeno-Sanzand Ana Sevilla-Pavón (2018). *Multilingual Writing and Pedagogical Cooperation in Virtual Learning Environments (pp. 200-220).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/examining-l2-learners-use-of-engagement-strategies-in-telecollaborative-written-interactions/202593

Social Strategy Use Among Omani Undergraduate Students
Sindhu Harish (2019). *Handbook of Research on Curriculum Reform Initiatives in English Education (pp. 216-233).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-strategy-use-among-omani-undergraduate-students/214220

Impacts of Directionality on Disfluency of English-Chinese Two-Way Sight Translation
Fan Yang, Fen Gaoand Kexin Zhang (2023). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/impacts-of-directionality-on-disfluency-of-english-chinese-two-way-sight-translation/323448

The Role of Research in Applied Linguistics
Jacqueline ammit (2024). *Exploring Contemporary English Language Education Practices (pp. 190-219).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-role-of-research-in-applied-linguistics/345620