Chapter 2
Twenty–Five Years of MALL Experimental Implementation Studies:
What Do We Really Know About It?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter offers a comprehensive, up-to-date overview of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) studies, from the first in 1994 through 2018, relating to the experimental implementation of mobile-based affordances and applications in the teaching and learning of languages, L1 as well as L2. It derives from the analysis of over 2000 MALL studies that have appeared in almost 500 distinct journals and presentations in conferences given by nearly 300 different professional organizations, the great majority of both sources being unrelated to language learning and teaching. It provides background information relating to these studies, documents their profoundly atheoretical nature, details their pedagogical features, and assesses their learning outcome effectiveness.

MALL STUDY SOURCES

MALL studies have been the focus of many reviews. In fact, thirty-two have been published, ten in the past two years alone. The first MALL review was that of Chinnery (2006), which included twenty-two studies published between 2001-2005. Unlike the latter, which treated the field broadly, most of the remaining thirty-one overviews have had a restricted focus, with the greatest attention being paid to vo-

cabulary acquisition (Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh, 2011; Afzali, et al., 2017; Mahdi, 2017; Çelik & Yavuz, 2018; Elgort, 2018; Lin & Lin, 2019). Other areas of specific interest were English as the target language (AbuSa'aleek, 2014; Hassan Taj, et al., 2016; Ok & Ratliffe, 2017), authentic environments (Shadiev, Hwang & Huang, 2017; Liu, Shadiev & Hwang, 2017; Shadiev, Liu & Hwang, 2019), collaborative language learning (Cong-Lem, 2018; Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018), location-based applications (Wang, Liu, & Hwang, 2017), speaking and listening (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield 2007), qualitative research (Yükselir, 2017), Activity theory (Lin *et al.,* 2019) and mobile phone usage (Darmi, & Albion, 2014). Another twelve meta-analyses have comprehensively covered the field of experimental implementations (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Viberg & Grönlund, 2012; Yang, 2013; Lee, et al., 2014; Bozdoğan, 2015; Burston, 2015; Duman, Orhon & Gedik, 2015; Sung, Chang, & Yang, 2015; Al-Qudaimi, 2013; Persson & Nouri, 2018; Cho, et al., 2018; Metruk, 2019).

With so many, and so recent, published MALL overviews, it is legitimate to ask what this chapter has to offer that previous reviews have not. The simple answer to that question is that all previous overviews have been based on very incomplete data. The number of experimental implementations analyzed in existing overviews is remarkably small. Half of the above analyses consisted of less than twenty-five studies, and another twelve between twenty-five and forty-five. Only four reviews involved more than fifty studies, the two most extensive sixty-nine and eighty-two.

The starting point of the present MALL overview was a general 1994-2012 MALL bibliography of some 575 studies underlying Burston 2013, which contained nearly 350 references to experimental implementations. This in itself was considerably more extensive than anything published before then. This general MALL bibliography derived primarily from the most prominent CALL and educational technology journals (*CALICO*, *CALL*, *Language Learning & Technology*, *ReCALL, British Journal of Educational Technology*) and associated conference proceedings. For reasons explained in Burston 2020 (forthcoming), however, reliance on such sources left many MALL studies unreported. Based on a process of systematic bibliographic mining, it turns out that some 876 MALL studies actually appeared during the 1994-2012 period, which is to say nearly a third were missing from the original underlying bibliography.

Rather than relying upon keyword searches of journal and conference publications or academic databases, systematic bibliographic mining started with publications listed in existing MALL overviews. These were then all directly consulted in order to extract from their references any potentially relevant publications not included in the overview bibliographies. In turn, the references in the new finds were consulted and the process systematically continued until no further new references were discovered in any further searches. A second important source for bibliographic mining was *ResearchGate*, which automatically notifies authors when their publications are cited in other papers. Given the frequent citation of the annotated MALL bibliography in Burston 2013, *ResearchGate* notifications provided an ongoing and up-to-date source of new MALL publications since 2012. These in turn were systematically mined for bibliographical references.

On the basis of the journals and conferences cited in the mined bibliographies, a manual search was then undertaken of the article titles and abstracts in these journals and conference proceedings. Where relevant, new papers were consulted and their references mined.

As a result of this systematic bibliographic mining, a total of 2072 MALL studies were identified between 1994 and 2018 (Table 1).

A little more than half (53%) of all MALL studies appeared as journal articles. Amazingly, these were distributed over 485 distinct journals. Equally surprising, two-thirds of these journals had no focus on language teaching, language learning or applied linguistics in any form. The second greatest source of

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