

iPads in the foreign language classroom: A learner's perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research paper presents the findings from the pilot study of a project exploring the potential of tablet computers in the foreign language classroom in a Malaysian public university. This article focuses on the technical amazements and challenges as experienced by a learner discovering her iPad 2 over four weeks. In-depth knowledge about the device's user-friendliness and language learning potential was gathered through a narrative qualitative approach using classroom observations, field notes and interviews. The objectives were to unveil the learner's perceptions toward the device as a novice user and to discover her strategies when handling the device for language learning. This study describes the learner's intentions for adopting the iPad as a learning tool and how she overcame technological obstacles. It provides educators with hints on the learner's tools and strategies for learning languages with the iPad as well as insights and recommendations to educators willing to venture into teaching languages with tablet computers.

Keywords: educational technology; MALL; foreign language learning; tablet computers; narrative inquiry

BACKGROUND

Technology mediated learning provides foreign language educators with the means to increased exposure to the target language within the classroom by providing offline as well as online resources. In addition, blended learning settings extend the learning environment to the online sphere and engage learners beyond the classroom (Conrad & Donaldson 2004). Online learning platforms such as learning management systems as well as customised learning groups on social networking sites enable learners and educators to contribute documents and links, to initiate discussions, to discuss course content and to collaborate in the target language (C. Gabarre & S. Gabarre 2010, Godwin-Jones 2005, Palloff & Pratt 2007, Pramela, Supyan Hussin & Sivapuniam 2011). Mobile learning, as defined by Sharples, Taylor and Vavoula (2010), brings this online dimension of language courses to the face-to-face

dimension. With the availability of broadband access and Wi-Fi networks, learners and educators can connect to the Internet when they need to. They can search for information, read course notes, consult references, share links as well as contribute to the on-going lesson (Kukulka-Hulme 2012). Mobile learning adds technological support to the face-to-face peer and instructor modes of support. With online and offline reference tools, the learners can verify and refine their work. Predictive text input and automated translators provide them with an immediate feedback (Godwin-Jones 2012). Checking structures maintains the learners' engaged with the task.

The human-machine interactions sustain engagement through the learners' constant search for the appropriate words and structures. Because learners consult each other, this learning process becomes collaborative and keeps the learners' involved in the activity (S. Gabarre & C. Gabarre 2010, Noraini Md Yusof 2008). The learners identify the problematic elements which they need to elucidate in order to complete the tasks (Baleghizadeh & Arab 2011) which enable them to formulate precise questions when they need help from their instructor. Subsequently, they can post their work and get their instructor feedback as well as comments from their peers. However, the smart phone was found inadequate for document viewing as well as for manipulating applications such as word processors, presentations and video editing (S. Gabarre & Gabarre 2013) because of the limited display.

The implementation of technology mediated language learning within a social constructivist framework have been found to sustain learner-centred learning and learner autonomy (Banister 2010, Chia 2007) by associating instructor, peer and technological learning support (Abrizah & Zainab 2011, C. Gabarre & Gabarre 2009, 2012, Kukulka-Hulme & Shield 2008). However, most classroom facilities are too rigid to fully engage the learners individually and collectively in authentic and meaningful language tasks (Alvarez, Brown & Nussbaum 2011, Lowther, Ross & Morrison 2003, Meurant 2010). Such activities require permanent access to the Internet to enable the learners to search for information and to develop digital as well as language literacies (Thang, Najihah Mahmud & Norizan Abd Razak 2012). The learners need to communicate within the class but also to connect with the real world in order to practise the four main language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Tablet computers have been found to encourage multiple learning strategies (Alvarez, et al. 2011, Evans 2008) by providing a variety of media and tools (Domakani, Roohani & Akbari 2012, Garner 2011, Lan, Sung & Chang 2007, Manuguerra & Petocz 2011). Audio-visual content was also described as promoting student-centred learning by Kim and Kim (2012) and Yang & Xie (2013). Tablet computers cater to mobile and versatile learning by providing educators with various working configurations and by enabling learners to perform a wide variety of tasks. The availability of rich media and resources increases the learners' engagement and autonomy (Alvarez, et al. 2011, Domakani, et al. 2012, Garner 2011). These devices also require minimal technical knowhow compared to sophisticated multimedia computer laboratories thus reducing the risk of technical inhibitions from lecturers and learners (Ghavifekr, Sufean Hussin & Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani 2011, Meurant 2010).

The choice of tablet computers in the current study was prompted by the specific needs of foreign language educators to engage learners in authentic tasks in order to convey all the aspects included in modern curricula such as the linguistic, cultural and communicative skills (Nakatani 2012). Although novel, tablet computers have already been implemented in several tertiary institutions (Chen 2013, Enriquez 2010, Kinash, Brand & Mathew 2012, Lys 2013) with encouraging results in terms of learners' motivation, engagement, creativity and autonomy.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aimed to explore how mobile tactile devices can be used in classroom settings to enhance language learning particularly by promoting flexible and active learning opportunities as reported in Chen (2013) and Lys (2013). Based on their experience with tablet computers, Mang and Wardley (2012) as well as Kinash, Brand and Mathew (2012) stressed the need to integrate the technological set-up within a pedagogical framework. Therefore, the current study used the technological learning content framework (TLCK) from Chai and Tsai (2013, p. 45) to explore the iPad's contribution to the learning experience. In their review of the literature on the technological pedagogical content knowledge framework from Koehler and Mishra (2009), Chai and Tsai recommended investigating the learners' educational experiences with the integrated technology to assess the appropriateness of the technological set-up with the learning outcomes. Moreover, Nor Fariza Mohd Nor, Hazita Azman and Afendi Hamat (2013) highlighted the benefits of associating end-users to the design of prototypes before launching the final action plan. The objectives were to understand the learner's reasons for choosing the iPad 2, to unveil her perceptions toward the device as a novice user and to explore how this device could be used in French classes from a learner's perspective (Chai, et al. 2013, Huang, Lin & Chuang 2007).

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A narrative qualitative design was adopted to provide a secure and private environment to encourage disclosure, thus generating a deeper understanding of the determining factors leading to the learner's motivation towards using the iPad and to the processes involved thereafter. It also gave the researchers insights on the device's technological user-friendliness and usefulness for foreign language learning based on the learner's story. A case study design was adopted using a narrative inquiry method of data collection and analysis. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the processes involved (Clandinin, Pushor & Murray Orr 2007, Ollerenshaw & Creswell 2002, Sinclair Bell 2002).

PARTICIPANTS

This study involved two researchers as participant observers and one learner as an expert participant. The two researchers had taught this learner over three consecutive semesters and a good teacher-student relationship existed. The fact that the learner, thereafter referred to with the pseudonym "Emilie" was in her final year positioned her as a primary source of data, first, as a site representative of the proposed sample population, and second, due to her own experience as an advanced proficiency learner. Emilie took her studies seriously. In class, she was a very lively and smiling student, generous, open-minded, talkative but also mature and never afraid to voice her opinion. These traits characterised her as a good interviewee.

SETTING

The study was conducted in a Malaysian public university. The French courses were delivered in classrooms as well as in computer language laboratories. The classrooms were equipped with a computer connected to the internet and to an LCD projector. The language laboratories consisted of tables of four computers connected to a class network and to the internet. All the computers were monitored from the teachers' computer station and connected to an interactive white board. Emilie owned an iPad 2, Wi-Fi and 3G enabled with

16 GB and her laptop was a Toshiba PORTEGE T210- 1026R equipped with an Intel® Pentium 1.33 GHz processor and 2048MB DDR3 1066MHz SDRAM. She used the iTunes software to transfer files between the iPad and her laptop and to connect to the iTunes Store to purchase podcasts, videos, books and applications.

DATA COLLECTION

In-class observations were used to collect data on how the iPad influenced Emilie's learning process technologically, pedagogically and socially. Discretion was the strategy adopted for the observation protocol in order to keep in-class behaviours and interactions as natural as possible. Further information was obtained by engaging Emilie in informal discussions during or immediately after she had been observed using the iPad. Field notes were logged and consisted mainly of memos describing Emilie's individual and collective usage of her iPad. Notes reported indications on the settings (before, during and after the class), the names of the learners involved, their seating arrangements and the applications used.

Observations, informal discussions and field notes were used to design the one-on-one interview protocol and to triangulate the findings. The interview was conducted two weeks after Emilie had received her iPad. At this stage, Emilie had acquired a sufficient level of autonomy in using the device. Furthermore, her excitement linked to the ownership of the iPad was expected to have subsided thus enabling Emilie to critically evaluate the device. The one-hour interview was recorded with Emilie's consent and transcribed verbatim. Emilie reviewed the transcript and was closely involved in the interpretation and analysis processes.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis comprised the three-dimensional space narrative structure established by Clandinin and Connelly (2000): interactions, continuity and situation. Interactions encompassed the social interactions between Emilie and the rest of the class (face-to-face and virtual) as well as the human-machine interactions. Continuity was divided in three chronological phases describing Emilie's perceptions of the past, present and future regarding the influence of the iPad on her life. The situation consisted in the contextualisation of the information emerging from Emilie's narration. The data from the multiple sources was coded using the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. The codes were then grouped in themes in order to answer the research questions. A textual analysis was performed on attached quotes and a word count.

FINDINGS

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE IPAD: SPEED, UBIQUITY AND SIZE

Emilie, as the rest of the class owned a laptop and a hand phone. During the interview, she described her iPad as being much faster than her laptop. She mentioned several times that the iPad started immediately: "*Laptop, we have to start it and wait until it has finished loading everything, but the iPad is like a hand phone, we just open it and it's ready to use... It is faster and it's convenient.*" Opening the cover magnet mechanism instantly resumed the last application from sleep mode. Similarly, pressing the central button or swiping a finger opened the last application. Finally, less than a minute was required to start from shut-down mode. For Emilie, this was a convenient feature that she associated with smart phones. This is congruent with findings from Kelly and Schrape (2010).

The comparison with smart phones is omnipresent throughout the discussion, particularly with the iPhone. Emilie mentioned similarities between the iPad and the iPhone

in nine separate instances related to nine different features. This strongly suggests that learners accustomed to using an iPhone would find it easy to switch to using an iPad in their French class. Her sister and her brother owned an iPhone. She had seen how they used it and what it could do. Emilie owned a feature-phone. However, she liked the size of the iPad screen: *“I know that the iPhone is good but I like a big screen so I choose to buy an iPad. Even if the iPad is less convenient to carry around I still prefer the iPad.”* This is consistent with findings from Alvarez et al. (2011), Choi, Sin and Lee (2011) as well as Culén and Gasparini (2013).

Interestingly, Emilie did not quote her laptop (4 quotes) as often as the iPhone (10 quotes) during the interview. In her opinion, her laptop was too bulky and too slow. This was also mentioned by Lowther, Ross and Morrison (2003) on their study of laptops in education as well as by Meurant (2010) and Poe (2010) on iPads. It seemed obvious to her that laptops were to be used in the colleges. Their size and weight limited their mobility. Although portable, they were not ubiquitous. On the other hand, smart phones were fast but Emilie described their screen as too small for comfortable reading. In mLearning situations confined to the classroom settings, we can assume that the iPad’s size would be an advantage compared to using smart phones.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TABLET

Regarding the choice of tablet computers, Emilie answered that her sister had advised her to compare the iPad 2 with the Samsung Galaxy Tab 1. Emilie tried both and consulted one of her friends who owned a Samsung Galaxy Tab1. Emilie hesitated between both devices. She felt that the Android operating system resembled more her laptop. As a student, she often resorted to USB thumb drives to share files with her classmates however, contrary to the Galaxy Tab, the iPad’s port did not support this function. She had also heard that the Galaxy Tab was more resistant *“in case it was dropped”*. After testing both devices, she was finally convinced by the iPad’s touch screen responsiveness and smooth transitions as described by Choi, Shin and Lee (2011) as well as in Culén and Gasparini (2013). The fact that her brother and sister used an iPhone influenced her decision since she knew that they would be helping her. This aspect highlights the need for technological assistance referred to as facilitating conditions in Venkatesh et al. (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis 2003). This is also consistent with Murray’s (2010) experiences who technologically engaged their students by setting up a help desk managed by the learners themselves as well as with Chen’s (2013) and Lys’ (2013) learner-created technological reviews. For educators, the fact that the iPad can be connected to a projector using a VGA adaptor is appealing as the learners’ will be able to easily share their productions with their classmates (Garner 2011, Melhuish & Falloon 2010).

TECHNOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE IPAD

ACCESSORIES AND APPLICATIONS

The interview revealed that Emilie was frustrated with the manufacturer’s marketing policy. Firstly, she regretted that the box contained only the iPad, a charger and a USB cable. This was mentioned a total of six times: *“In the box, it’s just the iPad ... the iPad only. I had to buy the cover and the screen protector.”* This meant additional costs because she was concerned about protecting the device. She was relieved to find a hard cover and film protector which she found both solid and functional from a night market vendor for a reasonable price. During the interview, she demonstrated how the cover could be positioned for typing, reading and playing. The cover, as she explained, was not only essential to protect the iPad but also rendered its usage more convenient. The cover is described as an essential addition by Kelly and Schrape (2010).

Regarding applications, she regretted on five occasions that only a few applications were preloaded: “*Apple should really install more applications. I was annoyed to have to download common free apps like YouTube and Facebook.*” She explained how it made it harder for her to use the iPad from the beginning. First, she had to learn how to use the iPad’s settings in order to choose between WIFI and 3G. Even though, her iPad featured both 3G and WIFI, she told us that she would exclusively use WIFI to connect to the Internet because she could not afford paying for the broadband access. Fortunately, she had access to WIFI at the university and in her college so finding a WIFI spot was quite easy for her. Meurant (2010) as well as Thang (2012) stressed the necessity for institutions to provide a free and easy access to WIFI in order to support mobile pedagogies.

Then, Emilie had to learn how to find and download applications from the Internet which also implied learning how to navigate within the App Store. Identifying useful applications for learning from either the App Store or Google Play were reported as time consuming and confusing in the literature. For educators, this implies providing learners with a list of applications which have been reviewed or to preload the iPads with the applications meant to be used in class. Furthermore, she found confusing that the prices were labelled in US dollars because it made the prices appear cheaper than if expressed in Malaysian Ringgit. She was however adamant that she would only download free applications which indicated that she wouldn’t have purchased applications from another brand online store. However, free applications often come with advertisements or consist of trial versions of the software. The free versions are limited and incite users to download the full paid versions. For example, language learning books will only provide access to the initial chapters whereas dictionaries will restrict their offline tools. Ireland and Woollerton (2010) also found that learners were reluctant to pay for applications. This financial aspect is worth mentioning in the event of implementing tablet computers in education on a larger scale, particularly if the devices were to be included within a university registration package as suggested by Meurant (2010).

Emilie was satisfied with the App Store in terms of choice and number of applications, particularly as she became used to the search engine which enabled her to find full free versions of learning applications and dictionaries. She said that it was fast and convenient to download applications: “*We can search by name and keywords and then straight away download...It’s easy.*” She then showed the applications that she had downloaded to learn French. Evans (2008), Garner (2011), Godwin and Jones (2012) as well as Meurant (2010) described how numerous applications could be used to foster foreign language learning such as dictionaries, vocabulary building lessons and podcasts. She seemed to find whatever she needed or fancied for free which confirmed her statement that she would never pay for applications. Another positive financial aspect was that she could communicate for free over WIFI using chat and voice-over applications. She enumerated Line, Vibers and Skype. She did not mention Messages and Face Time which came preloaded on her iPad. This could be explained by the fact that at the time of the research Messages and Face Time exclusively connected iOS (Apple’s mobile devices operating system) users over WIFI. Garner (2011) and Meurant (2010) underlined the usefulness of including these communications tools for a dynamic pedagogy.

IPAD’S INTERFACE

Emilie appreciated that the iPad “*had many functions*”. Emilie noted that the quality of the video playback was good. The integration of video and audio content was described by Banister (2010), Evans (2008) and Lys (2013) as facilitating understanding and engaging learners. Emilie also appreciated the usage of swipe gestures to navigate through the interface and within applications. The touch screen was described as “*easy to control*” and as “*faster than a mouse if you know how to control it*”. WIFI connectivity was mentioned nine times.

She was amazed by the speed with which the iPad tracked and connected to WIFI networks compared to her laptop: “*The iPad connects faster and we can search the information faster than with the laptop.*” She also liked how she received emails and messages notifications “*instantly*”. Learners readily communicate by email among themselves to brainstorm complete assignments and revise. Therefore, a permanent access coupled with the onscreen notification function allowed Emilie to study more efficiently.

However, learners also share files using thumb drives and as Emilie pointed out this was not feasible because she could only transfer files from her iPad to her laptop either through emails or by connecting her iPad to her laptop using the provided USB cable: “The iPad and the iPhone are not friendly with other products like you cannot insert a USB thumb drive.” File transfers and document sharing are only possible via a compatible USB cable connected to a computer using the iTunes software and via cloud computing either through emails or using an internet based repository such as iCloud or DropBox (Sullivan 2013). She was unaware that she could use iTunes to manage files and applications. File sharing using cloud computing through online repositories and emails was stated as positive in the current literature (Domakani, et al. 2012, Evans 2008, Godwin-Jones 2012, Mock 2004). Morgan and Toledo (2006) found that the learners remained focused during lectures since the notes would be pushed to their emails or devices. They stated that pushed lecture notes further engaged the learners during collaborative work because their work was reviewed and annotated. These authors also reported that their learners valued stylus annotations more than keyboard comments. Handwritten marking were interpreted as more personal and motivated the learners to study.

Overall Emilie found the iPad difficult to control. This was recurrent throughout the interview. She explained that she had to adapt to technical novelties such as using a touch screen instead of a mouse (3 instances), sharing files over email instead of thumb drive (2 instances). She also said that she needed time to adjust to the iOS interface (10 instances) which she summarised with “*You know there are a lot of things and I have to learn slowly*”. Fortunately, she could ask her sister (4 quotes) and her brother (1 quote) for support. This illustrates the necessity to allow the learners to progressively discover the various functions of the iPad (Chen 2013, Kelly & Schrape 2010, Lys 2013). When introducing tablet devices in the classroom, language activities could focus on tasks allowing for the discovery of the touch screen features such as handwriting capacities, tactile keyboard usage, and finger touch editing and navigating. Other tasks could then be added such as taking, saving, editing and exporting text, pictures, audio or video files. Finally, the learners could embed multimedia into notes for a richer content.

USEFULNESS OF THE IPAD IN THE FRENCH CLASS

Emilie used her iPad primarily for Internet (16 quotes). She mentioned that she used it to search for information on eight instances: online dictionary (4 quotes), online references (3 quotes) and YouTube (1 quote). She also described how she communicated through the Internet in 8 instances: email (2 quotes), chat (2 quotes), social networking sites (2 quotes), and voice over (2 quotes). She also used her iPad to play games (4 quotes) and to watch videos (1 quote). This emphasises her need to find free and reliable WIFI access points as advocated by Choi, Shin and Lee (2011), Godwin and Jones (2008), Havelka (2011), Thang et al. (2012) and Meurant (2010).

CURRENT USAGE IN THE FRENCH CLASS

Emilie estimated that she spent 6 to 7 hours daily using her iPad when there was no class. She

was observed as frequently using her iPad in her French class. As she explained, she needed a dictionary “to check the meaning” of French vocabulary (quoted 4 times). She used to bring her paper dictionary to class and she explained that the iPad was lighter and that in addition, the iPad “was not just a dictionary”. Google translate was quoted twice as a learning tool. Godwin and Jones (2008) described this service and Wikipedia’s integrated dictionary as useful language tools. The all-in-one aspect of tablet computers was reported as an acceptance factor for these devices (Culén & Gasparini 2012, Kinash, et al. 2012, Pegrum, Howitt & Striepe 2013). Emilie explained that tools such as Google translate helped the learners construct meaning by guiding their understanding of whole sentences. Thus, in addition to new vocabulary, they also acquired knowledge about sentence structures. Lowther, Ross and Morrison (2003) similarly found that language and arts learners relied more frequently on computers than students from other subjects.

Internet was also used to find information on the topics given. She described how the learners performed collaborative activities. If the class was conducted in a classroom, she explained that in a group of four, mostly two students would be involved. One student would be giving ideas and another would take notes and write the text while the two remaining students would just wait. The writing process was too long and either the learners forgot what they had in mind or they became bored and stopped participating. On the other hand, activities in the laboratories enabled each member to find ideas and information but they lost time going from one screen to another in order to combine their ideas. Ultimately, only one person would be writing, which according to Emilie, only benefited the writer who practiced the structures. The importance of taking part during collaborative writing tasks was also highlighted by Baleghizadeh (2011) in the language acquisition process. Similarly, Alvarez et al. (2011) found that tablet computers enhanced the learners’ engagement in collaborative activities compared to laptops. The slate format of the tablets sustained brainstorming and the sharing of multimedia content information without the physical barrier of the screen.

Since Emilie had her iPad, she appreciated how she could find accurate information quickly instead of spending time searching for ideas. This was particularly useful when the topic of discussion was novel to the students: *“We don’t have the experience. We have to imagine, to think but ... to find the information we can just go online.”* She also stated that she was less prone to forget her ideas if she could write them down immediately. She felt more efficient: *“Before when I wanted to share my ideas I had to wait for the others and sometimes for me, that’s hard because when I think of something I have to instantly write it down if not I will forget it.”*

Emilie was not used to annotate and to take notes using the iPad and clearly said that she preferred using pen and paper *“I prefer books because I can write on them but when I use iPad I have to type. I am not used to type too much, so writing down is faster.”* Conversely, tablet computers were described as promoting brainstorming activities due to the possibility of taking handwritten notes (Anderson et al. 2007, Enriquez 2010, Kinash, Brand, Mathew & Kordyban 2011, Méndez & Slisko 2013, Morgan & Toledo 2006). Poe (2010) noticed that learners preferred their textbooks but added that the price of textbooks compared to e-books was prone to invert this trend. Emilie analysed this as a matter of generation: *“For the new generation I think that’s good for them because they started to use all these things. [...] but for us it is like suddenly asking me to go and write in the iPad.”* This highlights the necessity of training learners about the multiple features at their disposal in tablet computers. Emilie was unaware that she could use brainstorming applications supporting virtual keyboard and handwriting annotations.

EMILIE'S VISION OF FUTURE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Classroom observations revealed that the iPad frequently switched hand, particularly before class. The learners usually played games. Sometimes they checked their emails and searched the Internet. During class, the iPad mainly travelled between students seated on the same row as Emilie. Emilie was a fervent advocate of the one student – one iPad configuration. In her opinion, if four students shared an iPad, only the student controlling the iPad would be truly engaged. Just as the sheet of paper remained in one hand, the iPad would remain with one person. As she later justified, the screen size could not allow for more than two or three persons. A study conducted on one learner –one laptop by Lowther, Ross and Morrison (2003) revealed that 42.6% of the learners worked individually in class whereas 91% reported working in tandem and 76% in groups at home at least once a week. Murray (2010) also reported successful collaborative activities with students using iPods and iPads in pairs or in larger groups.

Emilie also said that the lecturers could send the lessons and additional documents directly to the students' iPad. This would enable the learners to use their iPads as a book. As explained by Morgan and Toledo (2006), this would enable the learners to be more focused. Regarding collaborative activities, Emilie foresaw two strategies. In the first one, the learners would be consulting the same page on their iPads and discussing together. In the second one, she imagined each learner surfing for information and sharing the links with the others using emails. Instant messaging was also mentioned for brainstorming (Banister 2010).

According to Emilie, laboratories enabled efficient learning because everyone had access to a computer and to the Internet. The computer laboratories were configured with round tables of four computers. The teacher's screen was mirrored to the students' stations; however, half the class could not see the teacher. This was described both as a discomfort and as a distraction. The students need to look at the teacher to understand the lesson especially as it is taught in the target language: *"When we want to see the teacher we have to turn back. It is all right if we have to do this once or twice but after four or five times we become lazy so we just listen and read from the monitor."* In traditional classroom, the learners lack the computers to engage in task-based and collaborative activities (Lowther, et al. 2003). On the other hand, language laboratories are not flexible enough for lectures or large group activities (Meurant 2010), a statement which Emilie summarised with *"With iPads, maybe we can just adjust to the situation and move to different places. In the computer lab we cannot."*

Emilie noted that she preferred laboratories for listening comprehension exercises because she could concentrate on the task. However, she added that she would find even more efficient if all the students used their iPads. She explained that because the learners would access and save the file to their iPad they could listen to it again in their colleges. This coincides with findings on podcasts described by Evans (2008). Audio files were pushed to the learners' mobile devices which circumvented the fastidious process of searching for the files. Podcasts were also found to increase the learners' engagement and to help them revise. This coincides with Emilie's statement regarding how she studied to improve her listening skills: *"My listening is not very good so I can repeat the files at home. If I just do the listening in class in the computer lab I don't have the motivation to listen again because I have to download the file."*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In terms of mobile learning, Emilie described her iPad as more practical than her laptop. It was easier to carry because it was sleek and weighed less. It was also faster to start and to connect to WIFI. She liked the fact that she could resort to 3G to access the Internet even

though she exclusively used WIFI for financial concerns. On the other hand, smart phones were seen as tempting. They were described as real phones as opposed to tablet computers which used 3G only to connect to the internet. They were also perceived as truly mobile and ubiquitous due to their small sizes. However, they were seen as having limitations. Their screens in particular were described as too small for comfortable reading. Institutions willing to implement ubiquitous mobile learning could offer both options to their learners as implemented at Abilene Christian University (Meurant 2010).

Regarding the iPad's perceived ease-of-use, Emilie was truly challenged by the iOS interface. She had to get used to transferring files through email and kept on discovering new applications and features every day. However, her technological acceptance was high because she had chosen the iPad. Therefore, she was willing to learn how to use the device (Lee 2010, Venkatesh, et al. 2003). Before iPads are to be included in learning scenarios, time and activities should be allocated in order to allow the learners to get accustomed to the device's technical features. Support should be made available either delivered by the lecturers or by peers as implemented by Kinash et al. (2012), Chen (2013) and Lys (2013).

Emilie provided valuable insights on how the learners were carrying out individual tasks such as listening comprehension or collaborative work. Tablet computers are versatile and thus, have the potential to engage learners by keeping them interested, challenged and motivated. The pedagogical implementation should take into account the learners' preferred strategies and learning styles by incorporating content in various formats such as visual, tactile, kinaesthetic, and audio material and by associating individual and collaborative working configurations (Evans 2008, Kim & Kim 2012, Lys 2013, Yang & Xie 2013). Classroom activities should also make use of all the features of the devices: brainstorming, interactive presentation, handwriting annotations, podcasting, and multimedia content. Course content and applications could be pushed to the learners' devices for revision purposes. In the same way, learner created content could be pushed to the lecturers for feedback and future sharing in a peer learning approach (Morgan & Toledo 2006).

The potential of the device's potential for pedagogical implementation is perhaps not fully explored because teaching with tablet computers is still relatively novel. Consequently, there is a need for guidelines on how instructors could engage learners equipped with tablet computers as well as how to design pedagogical tasks and course material which would enhance the learners' experience (Garner 2011, Ifenthaler & Schweinbenz 2013, Mang & Wardley 2012, Mock 2004). Findings from current literature converge toward the usefulness of teaching with tablet computers (Chen 2013, Enriquez 2010, Lys 2013) for increased engaged learning, lifelong learning, and peer learning. Qualitative research on the learners' perceptions and usages would enable a deeper understanding of the learning processes involved with the integration of tablet computers in the language classroom. It would also provide educators with insights on how the learners foresee learning with these devices. Furthermore, the technological challenges faced by this learner were intricately linked to her specific situation, i.e., as being the only learner equipped with an iPad with a limited prior knowledge of the iOS interface. Therefore, there is a need for further research on the usability and utility of tablet computers from other manufacturers.

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