

## DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

*The article is aimed at studying the role of MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) in foreign language education as well as at analyzing the peculiarities of working with mobile devices in the process of learning a foreign language as a tool for the development of different language skills. The issues of working with a new digital generation of students while using correspondent devices have been considered. Applying MALL technology has been compared to traditional teacher-student cooperation. Two major obstacles that modern teachers have to overcome when working with MALL technology have been analyzed.*

*In terms of an increasingly pressing issue of diversifying the educational process, it has been proved that MALL technology provides teachers with new resources to expand usual curricula and to explore other forms of academic cooperation. Contemporary students are viewed as a technology-conscious group of society taking advantage of all the gadgets available nowadays, which can and should be fully applied in educational settings. Thus, the notion of MALL has been studied in connection with the development of listening as well as grammar skills.*

*The peculiarities of working with MALL within the scope of foreign language teaching, as well as using and creating one's own podcasts, have been studied. The following advantages of using MALL in a foreign-language classroom have been identified: mobility, absence of a classroom and class time barriers, possibilities of unlimited personal use, leading to the development of multitasking skills; authenticity of language material; motivation in extensive learning. On the other hand, working with MALL technology and podcasts in particular can be regarded as a time-consuming activity which requires a great deal of background work (topic development, assignments, language activities, etc.). Thus, a classroom discussion needs hours of preparation on both sides (teachers and students).*

**Key words:** MALL, mobile technology, podcast, language skills, m-learning, foreign language learners.

Nowadays we are facing the arrival of a new generation of students living in a digital era of portability and computer assisted learning. Both teaching and learning undergo dramatic processes of rethinking, reshaping and reanalyzing the core objectives. Educationists throughout the world have recognized the need to change the established framework of learning, but what exactly will fuel this change is yet to be decided.

MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) is becoming more and more popular as it provides us with new resources to expand usual curricula and to explore other forms of academic cooperation. Podcasting, in particular, has witnessed a sharp increase in popularity in ESL classroom.

The integration of MALL and computer assisted language learning (CALL) into educational settings has already transformed student-teacher interaction, though not on a full-scale basis as it is still considered a supplement and purely a teacher's initiative. In this case, we can turn to the encouraging and inspirational words of Tom Rank that "computers applied narrowly can restrict and box us in. Used imaginatively they can make us as broad and general as the casing air" [10, p. 2]. The lack of fundamental research and common understanding of MALL's basic notions and concepts can explain doubts and hesitance on the part of language teachers.

The focus of the present paper is on the analysis of MALL as a new phenomenon in foreign language teaching, and podcasts in particular as a bright example of MALL technology.

MALL is usually conducted through mobile devices (mobile phones, smartphones, tablet computers, mobile GPS systems, personal media players, etc.). According to Desmond Keegan, mobile learning can be described as "e-learning that uses mobile devices and wireless transmission" [6].

The problem of MALL and its implementation in foreign language teaching and learning has been a popular object of scientific discussions (D. Keegan, G. M. Chinnery, J. Burstun, V. Demouy, C. Wang, L. Winstead), while the issue of podcasting has been studied by A. Dudoladova, T. Erben, K. P. King, T. Rank, M. Thomas, L. Lomicka, G. Lord. MALL being so far a vague notion requires further research.

As it is generally known, almost no student today can survive without their phones, especially in educational settings. Not only can they use mobile devices to take notes, exchange ideas, but also use audio and video sources in and beyond the classroom, communicate with each other via any convenient connection. "Using mobile technology in this way can not only take instruction out of the classroom, but bring language learning into the real world" [2, p. 6].

MALL or m-learning is "language learning that is assisted or enhanced through the use of a handheld mobile device... mobile learning environments might be face-to-face, distance or online; further, they may be self-paced or calendar-based" [3, p. 9].

Mobile learning has been around for twenty years already, but only with mobile devices that are widely owned and financially more affordable now, it is possible to talk about the actual implementation of MALL into real educational settings. Researchers believe that "mobile technology can support both traditional pedagogical approaches (e.g. content transmission, behaviorist drills) and contemporary approaches (collaborative learning, constructivist activity)" [7, p. 317]. This means that MALL technology cannot cause major pedagogical shifts, if only in attitudinal terms. It has been suggested that "mobile devices may "open up" learning, for example, by introducing new types of content and interaction enabling different patterns of access, supporting and motivating learners and helping them identify their needs" [4, p. 14].

This paper is not aimed at exploiting technical characteristics of modern mobile devices or quantitative study of using them in a percentage ratio. The questions under discussion are how to use MALL successfully and what stands in the way of effective m-learning.

The vast number of MALL resources available allows students to practice such language skills as grammar, reading and writing, but despite this fact, listening (and watching, correspondingly) remains one of the most preferable skills.

One MALL technology that has proved a success among language learners is podcasting, as it provides them with learning materials, language practice and most importantly learner autonomy. Portable, easy to use and so familiar to modern students, ESL podcasts have set a dynamic trend in language learning.

Podcasts are digital audio or video files, which are produced and available online and are a "tool that enhances mastery of listening skills and students could be encouraged to use appropriate strategies... The merit of podcasting lies in the fact that one can listen at one's own convenience, at any place and any time at one's own pace" [11, p. 226].

The researchers L. Lomicka and G. Lord [8, p. 13] suggest an unusual way to understand the word "PODCAST", which gives us an insight into their characteristics:

- P – portability
- O – originality
- D – distribution
- C – collaboration
- A – authenticity
- S – sustainability
- T – technology.

It should be stated that though listening to podcasts is considered primarily a practice of listening skills, such an activity can effectively influence other language skills. As topics for podcasts vary and cover all imaginable subjects for discussion, they can also provide grammar or cultural tips in form of conversation (e.g. such topics as "Let's and Why don't" or "Can versus Can't", etc.).

In our opinion, podcasts dealing with grammar issues assigned should to be listened to as an additional revision task improving both grammar and listening skills.

There exist many more than one type of podcasts to work with. Usually authors distinguish four types of podcast creation and distribution:

- 1) learners record their own individual pronunciation activities, group discussions, presentations and distribute to their classmates;
- 2) learners record each other's pronunciation activities, presentations for peer evaluation; teacher records learners in conversations, pronunciation activities, presentations for teacher evaluation or distributes to learners for peer evaluation;
- 3) learners record teacher in lectures, pronunciation tutorials and discussions for out-of-class consolidation (consent must be sought for ethical reasons) [9, p. 165].

Students creating their own podcasts represent the ultimate aim of using podcasts in language learning: transformation from listening to speaking, from observing to acting. That is why creating one's own podcast can have the following results:

- developing and refining speaking for specific purposes and audiences;
- learners' creation of succinct audible summaries of learning which not only consolidate recently acquired knowledge and skills, but also prove highly effective revision tools;
- opportunities for a range of assessment – teacher-, self- and peer-based [5, p. 193].

Though the idea of using MALL in foreign language education saves a lot of class time, it is actually quite time-consuming for teachers, as it requires a great deal of background work (topic development, assignments, language activities, etc.). As a result, what, in fact, comes as a classroom discussion needs hours of preparation on both sides (teacher and students). Therefore, it is quite understandable why some teachers are reluctant to implement MALL technology.

Two major problems that can hinder the effective implementation of MALL are technology access and pedagogical methodology [2, p. 5].

In conclusion, it may seem appropriate to state that in comparison with traditional teacher-student cooperation, MALL is distinguished by its mobility, absence of classroom and class time barriers, possibilities of unlimited personal use, leading to the development of multitasking skills.

Further research will focus on psychological aspects of MALL implementation, in particular building up students' motivation to use podcasts.

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### РОЗВИТОК ІНШОМОВНИХ УМІНЬ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ МОБІЛЬНИХ ЗАСОБІВ НАВЧАННЯ

*Стаття присвячена дослідженню ролі мобільних засобів навчання в іноземній освіті та, серед іншого, розгляду особливостей роботи з подкастами у процесі вивчення іноземної мови як інструменту для розвитку різних мовленнєвих умінь. Висвітлено питання появи нового покоління студентів, що вимагає застосування нових засобів навчання. Порівнюється навчання з використанням мобільних засобів із традиційним підходом до організації навчального процесу.*

**Ключові слова:** мобільні засоби навчання, мобільні технології, мовленнєві уміння, подкаст, студенти, які вивчають іноземну мову.

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### РАЗВИТИЕ ИНОЯЗЫЧНЫХ УМЕНИЙ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ МОБИЛЬНЫХ СРЕДСТВ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

*Статья посвящена изучению роли мобильных средств обучения в иноязычном образовании, а также рассмотрению особенностей работы с подкастами в процессе изучения иностранного языка как инструмента для развития различных речевых умений. Рассматривается вопрос появления нового поколения студентов, которые требуют применения современных электронных средств обучения. Сравняется обучение с использованием мобильных средств и традиционный подход к организации учебного процесса.*

**Ключевые слова:** мобильные средства обучения, мобильные технологии, подкаст, речевые умения, студенты, изучающие иностранный язык.

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