A Proposal for the Development of 'E-Mentor' For Efl Learners

Jonghee JUNG [1], Hyoungyoub KIM [2]

[1] Department of Applied Linguistics
Korea University
Republic of Korea
johneyjung@gmail.com

[2] Department of English Language and Literature
Korea University
Republic of Korea
khyoub@korea.ac.kr

ABSTRACT

E-Mentor categorizes its users according to the particularized objectives of learning, content difficulties, age of target learners, educational environments, and both contents and system satisfactions of users. Unfortunately, the rise of educational demand for MALL eventually brought about quantitative changes in the field of English education – the boom of variety of applications – which is causing inconvenience and confusion to learners who are highly motivated in applying MALL. E-Mentor gives EFL-Learners a standard by which to measure and choose the proper applications for English learning. Furthermore, the actual development and experimental studies of E-Mentor will possibly suggest a new paradigm of language learning, and it will enable researchers and teachers to be interested in trying the new methodological approach towards MALL. In this article, we briefly discuss the functional categories of E-Mentor and guide through the process of development of E-Mentor.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is evolving beyond the qualitative growth of technological innovations of smart devices. With various inventive applications, MALL invites learners to become organizers, active participants, and evaluators themselves in the different learning situations. The feasible conception of E-Mentor is essentially an adviser on the operating systems of smart devices to introduce EFL-learners to the most effective and proper applications for English educational purpose on a case-by-case basis. One of the major features of the E-Mentor's mentoring system is the technological realization of functional categories based on analysis of the users' (EFL-learners) linguistic competence.

DEFINING MALL and E-Mentor

What is MALL?

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning can perhaps be defined as the use of mobile technologies and devices in language teaching and learning as an extension of the field of CALL, Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Earlier studies on the MALL focused on mobile applicability and usability in educational contexts using mobile devices such as PDAs, mobile phones and mp3 players (Kukulska 2007). MALL is to enable the learners and teachers to better achieve their responsibilities, both inside and outside the classroom, and find their activities 'personal', 'spontaneous', 'informal', 'context-aware', 'bite-sized', and 'portable' (Traxler 2007). Recent studies focused on the emerging technologies with the rapid growth of the smart devices such as Smartphone and Tablet PC (Warschauer 2010).

What is E-Mentor?

E-Mentor is an application for EFL-learners that provide them with the most useful information of various English educational applications, allowing users to choose the most appropriate applications available to them. Applications will be carefully analyzed based on six criteria: particularized objectives of learning, content difficulties, age of target learners, educational environments, and both contents and system satisfactions of users. The criteria should be determined by the specialists in English education, and any possible subsections of the criteria can be altered either by adding or creating further subcategories to the E-Mentor's operating system, as it becomes necessary. Learners not only will be able to build their own learning plans by considering their individual learning goals, English language competency, and personal interests, but also will be able to control their learning performances and evaluate the achievements themselves through the E-Mentor.

METHODOLOGY

Critical Analysis of English Learning Applications

This research and proposal on the initial planning step of E-Mentor is tentatively targeted at the English learning applications which have developed on the assumption that the users are mostly Korean EFL-learners. English learning applications account for the majority of all the categories for language educational applications in Korea.[1] In this article, the critical analysis of English learning applications has been done with the top-100-sales applications according to the 'iTunes store' [2] for the 31 days immediately preceding and ending May 2013 by way of showing an example. The applications are sorted according to the six criteria as previously stated, and the analyzing applications should clearly show sufficient explanations to the questions below.

- Is the content of the application valid enough to focus on certain purpose of learning activities?
- Is there a sustained consideration of difficulty among the words, phrases, and sentences used in the context?
- For whom is the application intended? Is the application intended for learners on any specific purposes?
- For which language-skills is the application focused on?
- Can we figure out the validity and the reliability of the contents by utilizing the E-Mentor?

Categorization of Applications
Particularized Objectives of Learning

Most applications that exist for Korean EFL-learners are to improve their language skills for assessment tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, and the National College Scholastic Ability Test of Korea. Learners who need to prepare for the above tests normally search for appropriate applications by keywords, and surely the providers offer information related to particularized objectives of their applications. However, there are also some applications that are not clearly focused on certain learning objectives, and that obviously lacks any significant impact on the learners. E-Mentor configures and analyzes the applications and finds out suitability in each differentiated categories based on learning objectives.

Table.1 Number of Applications Categorized by Learning Objectives[3]

Objects of Learning	College scholastic ability test	TOEFL	TOEIC	Conversation & Speaking	Vocabulary	Grammar	Business English	Etc.
Number of Applications	10	10	25	20	27	13	4	13

(Top-100-sales applications of the iTunes store, May 2013)

Content Difficulties

E-Mentor does not simply categorize the applications and learners into various levels such as Beginners, Intermediates, and Advanced categories by subjective or unilateral criteria. E-Mentor evaluates through both the application and the learner's linguistic competence by an elaborate analysis of applications or thoroughly designed level-

---

[1] There are 62 English learning applications out of the top-100-sales that have been sold at the 'iTunes store', and 46 out of 100 at 'play store' for the 31 days immediately preceding and ending May 2013.

[2] Apple Inc's 'iTunes store' is an operating online marketplace for buyers and sellers of applications and services.

[3] Part of the application-counts can be relevant in various areas.

testing stage in the operating process. Assignments of the E-Mentor's level-testing stage developed by experts of English education should be clear, concise, and comprehensive which also should take into account the characteristics of MALL.

Age of Target Learners and Educational Environments

The number of applications which have been developed for certain age-groups, English learning for children for example, is consistently increasing. Moreover, the various challenges on the approach of application development for the English learners who have a specific purpose in a particular learning environment, such as aged learners who have never experienced English learning or disabled learners, could bring forth rapid progress in MALL. E-Mentor should be watching for any developments of both technology and learning contents in the field of MALL and attract qualitative growth from the application developers and English educators. This fact being given, E-Mentor will be able to recommend the appropriate applications to learners under the various circumstances.

Improvement of Certain Language skills

In Korea, significant numbers of English learners are interested in improving their Speaking, Listening, Writing or Reading skills intensively. It seems to be that it is due to most Korean EFL-learners who are encouraged to prepare for various assessment tests, which is generally divided into 4 subjects, including Speaking, Listening, Writing and Reading. Consequently, English learning applications for Korean EFL-learners are the vast majority, which focuses on separate improvement of each English skill. E-Mentor classifies the applications into 5 categories, applications for Speaking, Listening, Writing, Reading skills and Vocabulary, considering the distinct situations of EFL learning in Korea.

Table.2 Number of Applications Focused on Certain Language Skills[4]

Language Skills	Speaking	Listening	Writing	Reading	Vocabulary
Number of applications	25	27	4	17	22

(Top-100-sales applications of the iTunes store, May 2013)

Content and System Satisfactions

E-Mentor builds up the criteria for a detailed evaluation of applications to ensure the learner's content and system satisfaction as stated below.

Table.3 Criteria for Evaluating Content Satisfaction

| Content Satisfaction	Detailed Evaluation of Content Satisfaction
Content Usability	· Advantages of MALL, such as portability and personalization, have been taken into account. · Convenient to learn when compared to offline education.
Achievement of Learning Objectives	· Contents contribute to accomplishing learning objectives. · Include contents related to educational goals.
Content Reliability	· Contents and their organization are reliable. · Contents are rational and useful for students.
Content and System Suitability	· Include well-founded information related to content and the visual materials (video clips, pictures) aids the retention of information.

---

[4] Part of the application-counts can be relevant in various areas

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothetical Operating Process and User Interface of E-Mentor
The following in an example of E-Mentor showing a hypothetical operating process used by a learner who is preparing for the Reading Comprehension component of TOEIC.

<Hypothetical Operating Process and User Interface of E-Mentor>
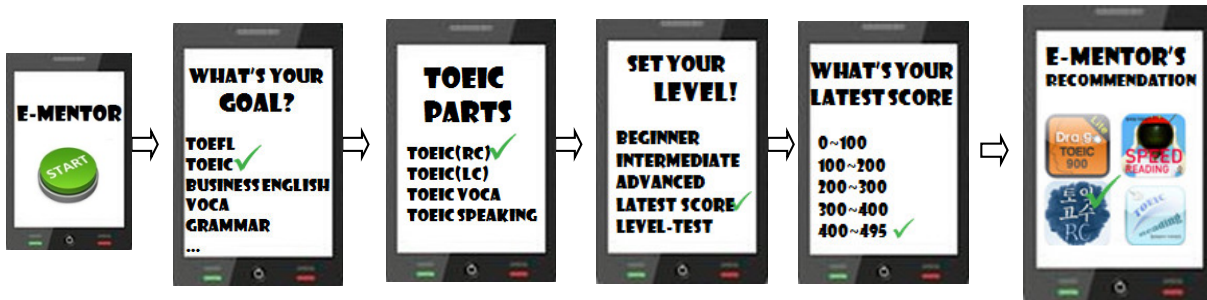
Information and Mentoring for Learners
E-Mentor provides information to its learners in their own native language to ensure the accurate understanding of the contents regarding to the applications.

<Information and Mentoring for Learners>

CONCLUSION

As a new educational paradigm of 21st century, E-Mentor plays its role as a 'mentor' for learners and teachers to approach to MALL more efficiently. Considering huge demand for English education in Korea, need for infrastructure to realize MALL, trend of education policy, rapid formation of MALL market, and increasing educational content providers, E-Mentor has unlimited potential as a pioneer for mobile-assisted foreign language education. Furthermore, the additional Studies on the development of the E-Mentor will enable researchers and teachers to be interested in trying the new methodological approach towards MALL.

REFERENCES

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme (2007). Institute of Educational Technology: *Mobile Usability in Educational Contexts: What have we learnt?*. The Open University, UK. 1-20.

John Traxler (2007). International Review of Research in Open and Distance *Learning : Defining, Discussing, and Evaluating Mobile Learning: The moving finger writes and having writ…*. 8(2). University of Wolverhampton, UK. 1-12.

Mark Warschauer & Meei-Ling Liaw (2010). *Emerging Technologies in Adult Literacy and Language Education.* Washington, DC. Pp.1-29