Walkinglish; a location-based learning application

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Abstract

Today's world is highly affected by new technologies that are enhancing and developing day by day. There is an obvious tendency towards applying different kinds of inventions and technologic innovations to various fields and aspects of human life. One of the most important aspects is of course education and recently numerous efforts have been done in order to integrate different sections of education (teaching, learning, testing, etc.) with various technologic novelties.in this paper we will suggest the design of a mobile-based application which would be one of the prototypes in the field of location-based language learning aiming to provide "ubiquitous learning". Many similar researches and prototypes (in case of applications and software) have been conducted up to now that we will go through some of them in this paper's literature review. And then we will elaborate on our suggested design which would be mostly about vocabulary learning and some expressions (in a limited scale).

Key Words: "location-based language learning", "ubiquitous learning", "vocabulary learning"

Introduction

This is the world of technology and development, we are witnessing new glamorous inventions here and there every day in every field which shows the eye-catching speed of this move towards future. Among all new inventions, portable devices in general and cellphones in particular have attracted a great part of the world's attention. Novel features are being added to new generations of cellphones, and brand new applications are designed based on these new facilities. Two of these exciting features in cellphones are "gyroscope" and "GPS" based on which many kinds of "location-based" applications for various activities (health-caring, entertainment, education) were developed. The proposed application in this article is a simulation of a successful location-based game named "Pokemon Go" using above-said features to provide an interesting augmented reality environment. There has been numerous prototype language learning applications like what Joseph et al.(2005) suggested which was named "photostudy" or the one introduced by Stockwell in 2007 that was a prototype mobile-based intelligent vocabulary tutor system. A great section of all these applications were location-based ones, but in a very limited context. Our suggested educational language-learning application named "Walkinglish"(walking English) is expected to provide location-based L2 information such as related vocabulary and expressions (special structures or chunks of language , etc in stronger versions) in order to provide "ubiquitous learning" and " second language learning" atmosphere for learners of a language as their foreign language. Such a program will of course have room for integrating entertainment sections into educational nature of the application as well.

Literature Review

Almost a large body of research has been conducted in the field of pedagogical technology in general and MALL (mobile-assisted language learning) in particular.

The very early works started with dictionary-based researches, covering topics like comparisons between traditional methods (paper and pen) and new methods (technology-based). We can name a couple of works here like Komaya and Teakeuchi (2003-2005), Shizuka (2003). We also reviewed works done in case of SMS vocabulary learning programs like researches done by M.Lu(2008) , Ynjie Song(2008) and local researches done by Kh.Motallebzadeh et al. (2011) in Iran

and also M.R Anani Sarab et al. (2012). More recent works have also been considered by Stockwell and several works testing different mobile applications like "PhotoStudy" (developed and checked by Joseph.S et al, 2005) have been reviewed as well in order to realize the strong and weak points of such educational applications.

The cellphone application designed and proposed in this article would be developed in 2 steps: 1) the beta version 2) the full version

The beta version

In its beta version it uses camera, in order to realize and classify the objects in front of the camera. The name of the object will be shown with its pronunciation and an example in a sentence. The offered information may also contain antonyms and synonyms based on the words. It can also cover some chunks of language but limited to noun phrases, for example realizing the shape, color, size, etc. of the phenomenon in front of the camera. All in all in this version, we will have a wide range of vocabulary to be learned.
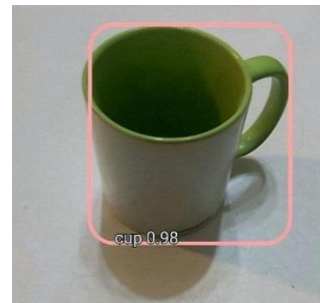
The full version

In its full version, the application will benefit the use of gyroscope and GPS, in order to recognize the place and phenomenon around and offer (download) information of different locations(stores , restaurants , coffee-shops , offices and schools , parks, etc.) that was prepared and uploaded on the application's corpus server by the developer.

In this version, we are able to cover related expressions, sentences, phrasal verbs, discourse, and etc. related to the location.

This version will have an interactive nature where learners can also add information and be content providers. The uploaded pieces of information

would be checked by personnel of the app and added to the corpus if suitable.

Other features

These kinds of applications have always room for progress.

The proposed application in this article can provide lots of side features such as games, contests, possibility of making personal flashcards, regular reviews, quizzes, providing progress charts, setting personal or group challenges, etc.

There can be 3 types of accounts for using this application.

Institutions and schools can have their accounts as organizations and apply their syllabus.

Teachers can have their accounts as independent instructors or with their affiliations.

Learners can also have their independent accounts for self-learning or enter as affiliated learners of their schools.

Discussion and implication

Such applications which can be used in related contexts can provide authentic language learning. And on the other hand, these little steps in e-learning can be taken in order to approach to a semi-ESL situation in countries with EFL situation.

Different educational organization (whether in large scales or little scales), instructors and learners can all make use of this application based on their needs.

It can support a wide range of activities from limited uses like learning vocabularies to great usages like instruction and learning through syllabuses planned by organizations. As it can also provide formative and summative assessments as well automatically, in case of applying some security policies, it can serve as a powerful tool able to reduce the costs and manage the use of time and energy.

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