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A Proposal for a MALL Platform Design

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Keywords

mobile-assisted language learning, MALL, computer-assisted language learning, CALL, platform, communication skills, speaking, listening, oral, aural, self-efficacy, motivation, The L2 Motivational Self System, EIL, EFL, autonomous learning (AL), inter-cultural communicative competence (ICC)

Abstract

In this article, the design for a MALL smart-phone application which could also serve as a MALL *platform* for smart-phones and be used to help co-ordinate learners' total in- and between-class L2 learning experience is proposed. It is aimed at offering a variety of affordances to help Japanese EIL learners to improve their L2 communication skills, sense of self-efficacy, and motivation. Such affordances include future L2 self image description creation, peer feedback exchange, audio journal entry recording, between-class task-based learner exchange of audio messages, and ongoing learner self-assessment of his/her global communication (i.e. inter-cultural communicative competence-related) skills. Providing empirical evidence attesting to the pedagogical effectiveness of the platform is beyond the scope of the article. However, it will be the focus of the next step in this line of research.

Introduction

A Platform to Promote and Guide the Autonomous Development of EIL Teachers and Learners

In Stewart (2015), Stewart introduced a proposal for a learner autonomy management system (LAMS). Using an updated version of the tool, learners in CALL classes are able to earn individual and group points through completing in-class tasks, self-reflect after using relevant online tools (e.g. ALC NetAcademy2), and self-assess their progress related to the interactional skills component of their inter-cultural communicative competence.

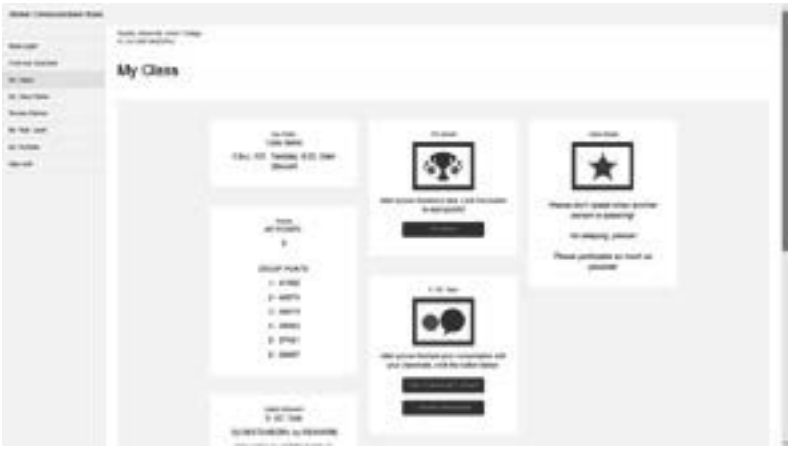


Image 1: A screenshot of the "My Class" page used by learners during CALL classes

In a follow-up article, Stewart and Mortson (in press) presented the findings of a small-scale action research project about a related online tool which aimed to help teachers to continue their professional development (see Image 2). In Phase I of that study, Stewart drew on the literature to determine a suitable design and suitable functionality for such a tool (and then developed it). In Phase II, both teacher-researchers employed the tool to engage in peer coaching over a two-week period at their university just outside Tokyo, Japan. They then drew up an action plan for how the tool could be revised and then employed successfully by other teachers to help them to continue their own PD efforts autonomously and/or within the context of on-site PD training and/or peer coaching.

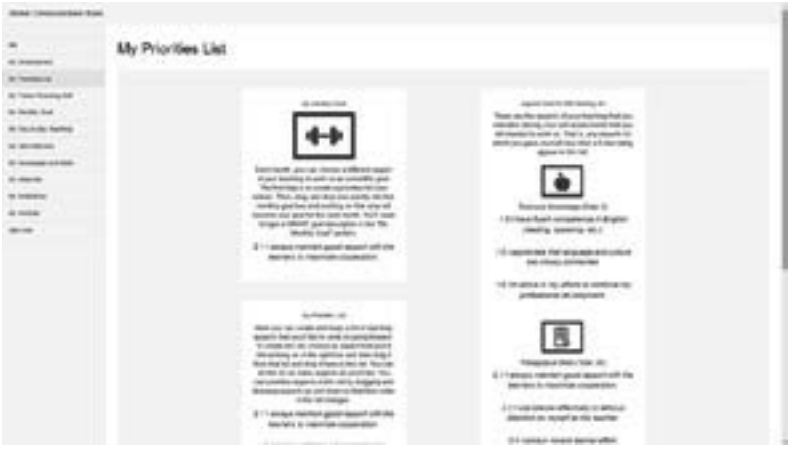


Image 2: A screenshot of the online tool for teacher professional development

By drawing on the relevant literature to create a platform which provides online tools for both learners and teachers, the current researcher hopes that the skills, sense of self-efficacy, and motivation of all users can be positively influenced. (Studies utilizing a rigorous research design and experimental methods to assess the effectiveness of the different elements of the platform will be the subject of future research.)

The focus of the current article is the proposal of a design for a smart-phone application - and MALL *platform* for smart-phones - which, in combination with the web-based platform mentioned above - would aim to offer a variety of affordances which should help learners to improve their L2 communication skills, their sense of self-efficacy, and their motivation. Beyond this, one of the main motivations for seeking to create the platform was the desire to provide learners with additional opportunities to develop their communication skills between classes (no matter the type of class - e.g. CALL, reading, speaking, and perhaps eventually even content-based classes). As Liu (2009) points out, CALL classes may not provide learners with enough opportunities to develop their communication skills. In some cases, this may be because they spend most of their time in class engaging in learning tasks individually using a PC. Other class types (e.g. oral communication classes) may provide more opportunities for spoken interaction with classmates and the teacher. However, even classes which have such an emphasis are limited in their ability to facilitate learner progress to the extent needed. One now obvious possibility for helping to ameliorate this problem is learners' use of their smart phones for between-class review and communicative task completion.

Literature Review

Opportunities

As Hsu (2013) puts it, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) "can offer the advantage of mobility, which enables seamless learning from inside to outside the classroom" (p. 209). Rahimi and Miri (2014) concur, asserting that "mobile phones provide ample opportunities for learners to have continuous connection with the target language" (p. 1473). Kim and Kwon (2012) note three benefits based on their review of the literature: (1) MALL allows easy and prompt "anytime, anywhere" language-learning materials access and communication; (2) four-skills development is facilitated by learners engaging in both individual and collaborative tasks; and (3) the resources and tools that MALL provides encourages "learners to be more motivated, autonomous, situated (site-specific), and socially interactive" (p. 35). Empirical evidence to back

up these claims remains limited, however (see especially Burston, 2015 and Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014). In a review of 291 MALL studies, Burston determined that only nineteen of the studies reviewed provided what he considered to be a reliable indication of effect on learner progress. He concluded that 80% of those studies did, however, indicate an overwhelmingly positive effect on learner progress. Of the nineteen studies, eleven were concerned with vocabulary acquisition, four were concerned with reading competency, and three were concerned with using the audio recording functionality of a mobile device to develop learners' listening and speaking skills.

Learner Acceptance

Previous efforts to employ MALL innovations have garnered mixed feedback from learners. In their review of the literature, Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, and Freynik (2014) report that studies indicate that "learners enjoy using technology in FL learning and that they prefer using technology over more traditional methods and materials ... learners tend to be more engaged in the process of learning, and have a more positive attitude towards learning" (p. 92). In their review, these researchers could provide only moderate support for such claims. Further, not all learners may be impressed with the innovations that teachers may seek to incorporate into their classes. Hsu (2013) found that culture influenced the extent to which learners perceived the technology used in the researcher's study, with Japanese learners being among those that were less impressed than learners from other countries. Hsu concluded that learners' preference for teacher-centered instruction (p. 208) and their commonly using mobile technology for communication and entertainment purposes (p. 206) rather than for education may have been influencing factors.

Approach

Stockwell and Hubbard (2013, pp. 8-10) provide ten principles which can be drawn on to guide MALL innovation and implementation. Beyond these, other researchers recommend that developers of MALL innovations: (1) ensure that the innovation has a "sound pedagogical framework" (Hoven & Palalas, 2011, p. 714) and seeks to make use of the technology in a way that maximizes its usefulness to the L2 learning process (Burston, 2015; Kim & Kwon, 2012); (2) ensure that the innovation seeks to actively engage learners in constructivist learning processes rather than simply having them memorize and reproduce (see the literature review in Derakhshan &

Khodabakhshzadeh, 2011); and (3) design such innovations so that learners may use them not only individually, but also for authentic interactions with other learners (Tai, 2012).

The above paragraphs would seem to indicate that further MALL innovation - and empirical research to assess the effectiveness of that innovation - is both necessary and justified. Further, any overall approach developed/employed by MALL application developers should be principled, with a solid footing in the applied linguistics and SLA literature, and it should also be one that takes into account the inherent affordances and limitations of the technology that it seeks to make use of to maximize its usefulness to the L2 learning process. In addition, it would seem that a MALL platform should seek to foster four-skills development, provide opportunities to review in-class content and do related tasks out of class both individually and collaboratively (and this should include situated (site/context-specific) tasks), and engage learners in constructivist learning processes. It would also seem that, though prior research has indicated that some learners may welcome the use of MALL technology, further work needs to be done to encourage broader acceptance, with cultural context being one factor that should be taken into consideration when designing such innovations.

Why a MALL Platform is Needed

At this juncture, the reader may be questioning whether the creation of a MALL platform is necessary given the amount of MALL innovation that has already taken place (again, see Burston, 2015 and Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014) and the number of non-MALL commercial offerings that are available (e.g. "Line" - it offers a number of affordances that could be used for L2 learning). Specific ones could certainly be used by themselves and/or in combination. As Burston points out, however, even the newest MALL innovations (i.e. those specifically designed and developed for the purposes of L2 learning) do not offer the types of affordances that may be of most pedagogical use. Still in its infancy, it is clear that a lot of experimentation is still taking place within the field of MALL, which is essential. In this vein, but taking a broader view, what seems to be needed is a MALL *platform* design for smart-phones which could be used to help co-ordinate learners' total in- and between-class L2 learning experience. This platform would seek to offer that combination of features specifically needed to facilitate the L2 learning process, but which is not available elsewhere (and also those features perhaps available elsewhere, but which could use customizing and simplifying to suit the specific needs of L2 learners).

Method

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is grounded in the existing literature on inter-cultural communicative competence (see Byram, 1997; Canale, 1983; Council of Europe, 2001), social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, as cited in, Mills, 2014), and The L2 Motivational Self System (Dornyei, 2009) and motivation (see e.g. Ushioda, 2014).

Design of the Platform

To design the platform, the current researcher drew on the ten principles provided by Stockwell and Hubbard (2013, pp. 8-10) and also the other elements of the literature reviewed above. The researcher's own practical teaching experience was also drawn on. On the following pages will be presented designs for each section of the platform (see Table 1) and the affordances that each section offers (see Table 2). The designs were created using a personal copy of Adobe Illustrator CS5. At the top of each screenshot is a global header, which is the same for all sections. At the bottom of most screenshots is a bar that is fixed (that is, it remains in the same position even if the learner scrolls up and down the page). On the bar is the word "Menu", which is a button, and if touched, it will re-direct the learner back to the home screen (see Image 3). On the home screen, each box for each section is a button that should be touched to access that section (e.g. My Future L2 Self). Any box without fill on any other screen is a button, a field box that text should be added to, or a drop-down box - that is, an item to be touched. Any text which is larger, bolded, and features an exclamation mark (!) - e.g. "Add!" - is a button for doing what the text of the button suggests. Any quiz option (e.g. "(A) reserved seat" in the "Textbook Quizzes" section) should be touched to choose that option.

The platform will be made available to both iOS and Android users. This should see that the platform can be used by virtually all learners with a smart-phone (a version of the platform can be supplied to learners who use Windows-based smart-phones should there be a need for that). As for learners who do not own a smart-phone, what to do in such cases will need to be determined by the faculty at each specific institution. Based on the current researcher's own practical teaching experience, there should be very few learners who do not own a smart-phone. In such cases, acquiring one, or an iPod (Apple Inc.'s mobile device for media consumption), could be suggested to such learners. If this is deemed to be inappropriate, institutions could provide a device loaning service whereby learners could loan and use an institution-owned iPod (which would need wi-fi

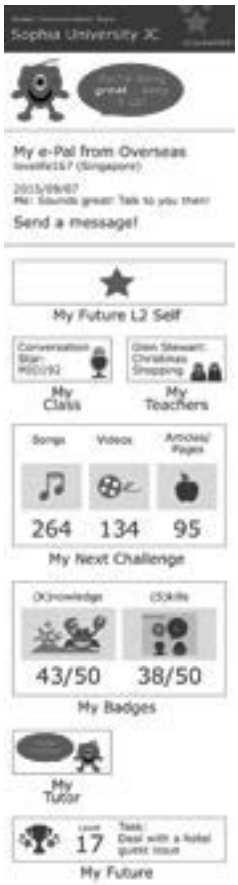
capability).

Most data added by the learner will save on the learner's smart-phone only (that is, it will not be sent to the platform website's database). Further, no actual learner names or student numbers will be used within the platform. This reduces risk to learners and their privacy. One disadvantage of this will be that if the learner loses or is no longer able to use his/her smart-phone, most data will be lost (unless he/she was using a cloud-based backup storage service provided by the manufacturer or some other provider). Data that is sent to and saved on the platform database will include: (1) the learner's username (text); (2) voice recorded messages (audio files); (3) small goal types chosen (text); (4) feedback from classmates (text); (5) points (digits); (6) rankings (digit); (7) learning preferences (text); (8) autonomous learning task types completed (text); and (9) any content, links, etc. added by teachers (text).

There is very little Japanese-language text used in the platform. Providing learners with a paper-based booklet with explanations and guidance in Japanese along with screenshots should alleviate the need for much Japanese-language text to appear in the platform itself. However, it can be added as part of a future update, if needed.

Ongoing engagement with the literature, future experimental research, and feedback from teachers and learners will lead to the design of some/all sections needing to be updated. Non-critical updates will be made after each term ends (i.e. in August and February). Learners will need to download and install such updates themselves at the beginning of the following term.

Table 1: Screenshots of each section of the MALL platform



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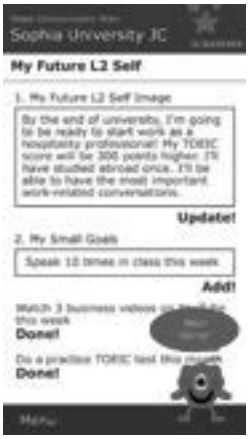

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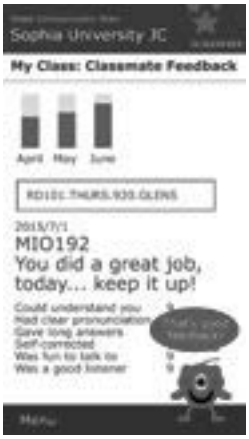

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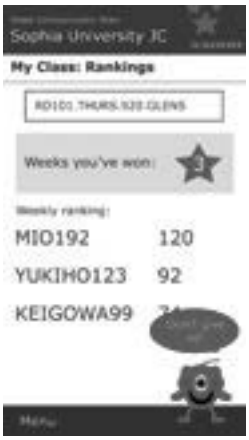

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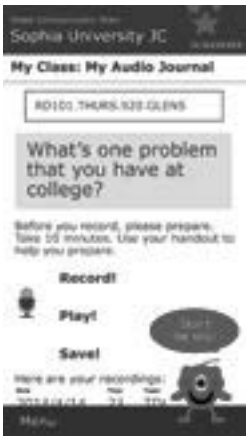

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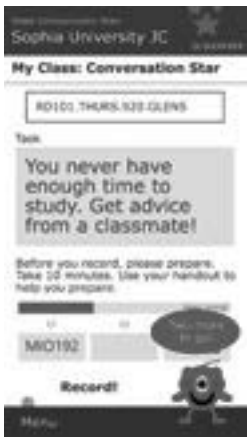

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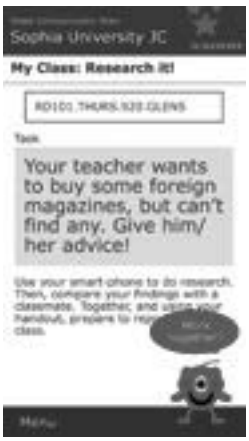

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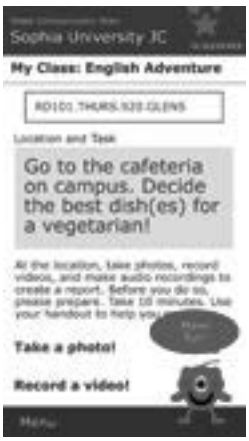

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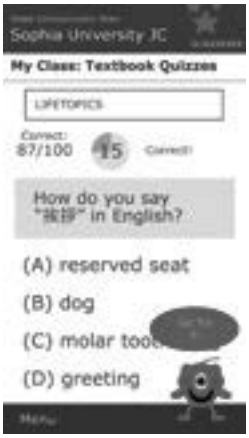

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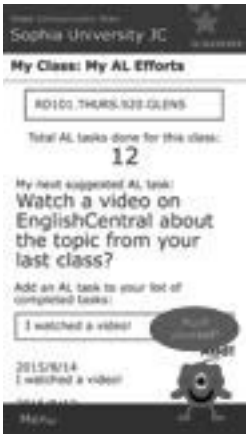

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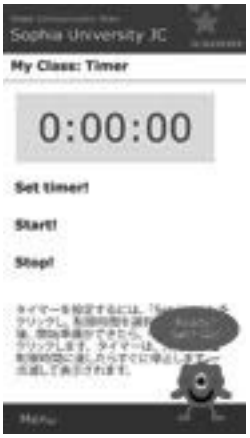

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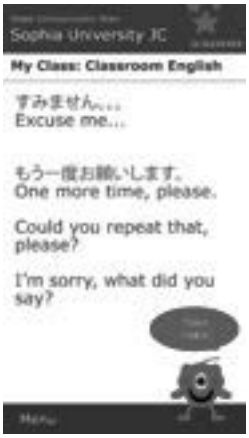

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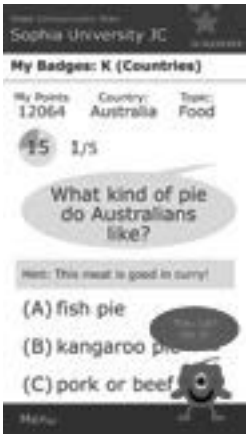

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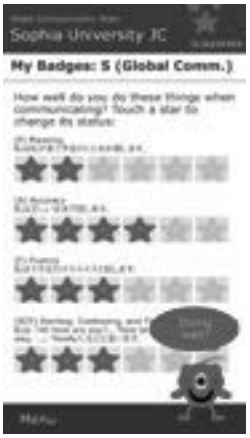

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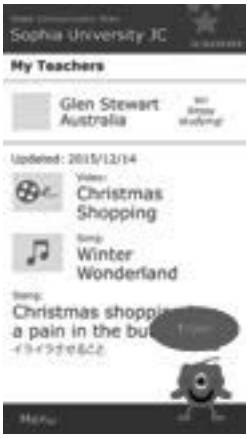

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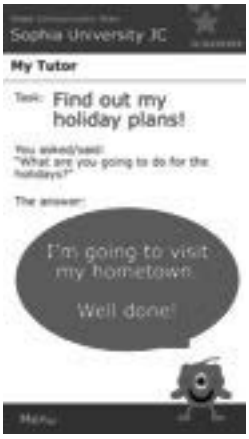


(Image 18)

Table 2: Affordances of each section of the MALL platform

Image 3	Home	This is the first screen that the learner will see after start up. It is also the main menu, which the user will return to after finishing using one section and wanting to use another. Two sections not covered later in this article are the "My e-Pal from Overseas" section and the "My Next Challenge" section. Using the first, the learner can connect with a fellow L2 learner and non-native speaker overseas (e.g. in Singapore). Using the second, the learner can choose to do online tasks (e.g. listen to a song), which are suggested to him/her based on his/her current proficiency level and his/her indicated learning style(s) and preferences for tools and tasks (see "My AL Efforts" below).
Image 4	My Future L2 Self	In this section, the learner can create and maintain a description of his/her future L2 self image (and also his/her undesired/feared self image), set "small goals" (i.e. proximate goals) and also set them as done later, and keep a personalized list of language learning tactics.
Image 5	Classmate Feedback	In this section, the learner can exchange feedback with classmates (specifically, those that are his/her speaking partners in class and/or between classes). The learner gives his/her classmate a score for each item (e.g. "Could understand you") and then selects a pre-set message to send (e.g. "You did a great job today... keep it up!").
Image 6	Rankings	In this section, the learner is able to see his/her ranking relative to that of his/her classmates. This ranking is determined by the number of points the learner earned that week through using the platform. It may also be feasible for some teachers - i.e. those that have time - to manually update the database and have the number of participation points that he/she gave learners that week to also determine this ranking.

Image 7	My Audio Journal	In this section, the learner completes individual speaking tasks by recording him/herself and saving the recording, which can then be played back in class.
Image 8	Conversation Star	In this section, the learner completes task-based collaborative speaking tasks with his/her classmates by exchanging recorded messages. Learners are able to give post-task feedback to each other using the platform.
Image 9	Research it!	In this section, the learner uses his/her smart-phone to look up information in English, and then compares his/her findings with a classmate, with the two then collaboratively preparing a report in preparation for reporting back in class.
Image 10	English Adventure	In this section, the learner is asked to go to a specific location and create a report by taking photos, recording videos, and making audio recordings. This could be done collaboratively.
Image 11	Textbook Quizzes	In this section, the learner can review previously learned linguistic content appearing in a class's textbook.
Image 12	My AL Efforts	In this section, the learner can update the number of autonomous learning (AL) tasks that he/she has done outside of class. During set-up, the learner will indicate his/her learning style(s) and preferences for tools and tasks, with the platform later dynamically serving up suggested AL tools and task types in this section.
Image 13	Timer	In this section, the learner can set a time limit for task completion and have the platform count down and sound an alarm when the specified time period has passed.
Image 14	Classroom English	In this section, the learner can access language useful for classroom use.

Images 15 and 16	My Badges	Image 15 In this section, the learner can do tasks to help him/her to build his/her inter-cultural communicative competence (i.e. his/her inter-cultural knowledge, awareness, tolerance, sensitivity, etc.). It should be possible to use quizzes and other formats to help in this knowledge- and attitude-building process.
		Image 16 The learner can also use this section to self-assess his/her progress related to the interactional skills component of his/her inter-cultural communicative competence (i.e. pronunciation, turn taking, etc.).
Image 17	My Teachers	In this section, the learner can access learning content provided by teachers at his/her institution, such as videos and slang.
Image 18	My Tutor	In this section, the learner can carry on a structured exchange of audio recordings with a virtual study tutor similar to the way that Siri is used. This should be possible using an API/SDK from Apple, Inc. or another company and providing the linguistic content in csv files. This can be used in two ways: (1) the platform can provide general non-class content and its use does not count towards any in-class assessment; or (2) an individual teacher can add content for this section so that the tutor can be used by learners to practice target content from his/her class between classes.

Image 1 on page 106 is a screenshot of a companion web page that could be projected onto the projector screen in learners' classrooms. It could be shown at a certain point in each class to display data such as the recent achievements of learners in the class. The teacher could also do things like click "Play!" to play the audio journal file of a learner who had volunteered to share a recording that he/she had made in preparation for the current class. The goal of the page would be to encourage the autonomous use of the platform between classes and also to reward those learners who did. An additional page would also be used by the teacher only that would display the list of learners in the class and which tasks the learners had and had not completed.

Framework

Featured below is a framework for how the MALL platform could be used both in, and between, classes. Only those sections to be used for class-related purposes are included:

Time	Sections
Class 2	(For the current class) My Future L2 Self
↓	
Between Classes	Rankings My Audio Journal Conversation Star Research it! English Adventure Textbook Quizzes My AL Efforts My Tutor
↓	
Class 3	(For post-homework follow-up) My AL Efforts My Audio Journal Conversation Star Research it! English Adventure (For the current class) My Future L2 Self

Diagram 1: A framework for using the MALL platform in and between classes

Learners would firstly use the platform at/near the beginning of Class 2 to strengthen their future L2 self image (presuming that the teacher had had the learners add their descriptions in Class 1 of a standard fifteen-week course). They would do this with the support of paper-based materials and teacher-fronted guided imagery training

(this would include learners strengthening their undesired/feared self image). The learners would then put their smart-phones away (unless the teacher wanted them to use the "Timer" and/or "Classroom English" sections). The learners would next use the platform between Classes 2 and 3 for the purposes of: (1) checking their in-class ranking relative to other learners in the class; (2) recording an audio journal entry relevant to the topic of the class they just had (they would use a handout, also); (3) completing the "Conversation Star" speaking task relevant to the topic of the class they just had with at least one other classmate (they would use a handout, also); (4) completing the quiz for the textbook chapter just studied; (5) completing one or more autonomous learning (AL) tasks using resources such as YouTube related to the topic of the class they just had (and they would complete a related paper-based AL evidence handout); and (6) using the "My Tutor" section to have a "virtual conversation" which is also relevant to the topic of the class they just had, but which is also more structured than the one each learner had with his/her classmate when using the "Conversation Star" section (in fact, learners could use "My Tutor" both before and after completing the less-structured "Conversation Star" task since it could help to prepare them for that task and then review, practice, and hopefully proceduralize relevant linguistic elements). Note here that the teacher may have learners use the "Research it!" and/or "English Adventure" section(s) rather than the sections just mentioned. In fact, most teachers will probably alternate between sections across the term, or preferably, allow learners as much freedom of choice as possible regarding which sections to use, how often, when, and with whom. At/Near the beginning of Class 3, any learners who did AL tasks would show their evidence handouts to the teacher in order to confirm completion. In the same class, the teacher could use whole-class, group, and/or pair work to give learners the opportunity to share their "My Audio Journal" and "Conversation Star" recordings with their classmates, and he/she would also have learners show their "Conversation Star" handouts to confirm completion. At any point in the class, the teacher could display the "My Class" page on the projector screen to highlight the achievements of learners in the class. After Class 3, the learners would once again do between-class tasks. The process could continue like this week to week (or as often as possible/desired).

An essential element of the framework is the inclusion of paper-based materials. The purpose of these is threefold: (1) to provide learners with information about the platform and guidance for using it; this would be a booklet in the learners' L1 featuring a step-by-step explanation of how to use each section (which would include screenshots of each section); (2) to provide learners with handouts to be used by them prior to, during,

and after speaking tasks in sections such as "My Audio Journal" and "Conversation Star"; the one for "Conversation Star" provides space for learners to: (a) note how they will use a chosen global communication (i.e. inter-cultural communicative competence-related) tactic during the task; (b) individually brainstorm and note language that they would like to use during the task; (c) note down the outcome of the task (e.g. advice they received, the decision they made with their classmate, etc.); and (d) note down any mistakes they noticed they made and/or language that they would like to ask the teacher about; and (3) to provide learners with autonomous learning (AL) evidence handouts which they complete at home and submit to (or at least show) the teacher in the next class so that he/she can confirm each learner's AL efforts.

Engagement with the Literature

The follow paragraphs should indicate how the relevant literature has been drawn on to design several core sections of the platform.

My Future L2 Self

The L2 Motivational Self System (Dornyei, 2009) and Language-learning Strategies (Oxford, 2011)

This section of the platform has been designed to have learners create a description of their desired future self image as specified by Dornyei (i.e. elaborate and vivid, etc.) (p. 32). In class, learners can then regularly strengthen this by engaging in guided imagery training. They can also strengthen their undesired/feared self image through guided imagery training. Further, learners can set "small goals" (i.e. proximate goals) and later set them as done before setting new ones. These goals should help them to incrementally realize their future L2 self image. They can also choose tactics related to language-learning strategies to use to help them to realize their desired future L2 self.

My Audio Journal

Strategic Planning (see e.g. Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998) and Task Authenticity (Tai, 2012)

This section has been designed to have learners make short recordings related to the topic of the class just taken. By supplying the paper-based handout and manipulating the planning conditions related to planning time and guidance vs. no guidance, the teacher should be able to have learners achieve specific pedagogical goals (i.e. production which is e.g. complex). Further, when setting the task, the teacher could specify that learners make a recording when in an authentic context relevant to the week's topic (e.g.

if the topic was related to talking about problems one has and a learner had just had a problem with a drink vending machine, he/she may make a recording related to that *in context*).

Conversation Star

Task-based Language Teaching (see e.g. Ellis, 2003; Tai, 2012; Willis & Willis, 2007)

This section has been designed to have learners engage in task-based speaking task completion related to the topic and function of the class just taken. In the screenshot provided, the task is "You never have enough time to study. Get advice from a classmate!" How task-like is this? The following is based on the six questions Willis & Willis list (p. 13): it should engage the learner since it may be a problem that he/she actually has in real life; there is a primary focus on meaning as no specific forms are specified and the learner is free to ask and answer using his/her existing linguistic repertoire and also any language he/she brainstorms individually during pre-task preparation; there is an outcome: the learner gets advice from at least one classmate; success is judged in terms of the outcome since the goal for the learner is to get the advice, which the teacher can then ask for in the next class; completion is a priority for the same reason; and, the activity does relate to real-world activities. A task sequence (p. 24) for such a task may involve: (1) the teacher priming the learners with a demonstration in Class 2; (2) the learners preparing for and performing the task at home using the platform; and (3) the teacher following up with the learners in Class 3 and having them plan and report the best advice. Additionally, by informing the learners in Class 2 that they will be sharing their recordings in Class 3, he/she is setting up a post-task requirement, which could encourage corrective monitoring (Skehan & Foster, 1997, as cited in, Skehan, 1998). Note also that the teacher could provide different task types (e.g. information gap/required information exchange) by randomly providing some information to one learner and other information to the other learner (see over).

My Badges

Inter-cultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997; Canale, 1983; Council of Europe, 2001)

This section has been designed to have learners engage in ongoing self-assessment of the interactional skills component of their inter-cultural communicative competence. It features 15 items, which are: (P) planning, (A) accuracy, (F) fluency, (SCF) starting, continuing, and finishing conversations, (FP) formality and politeness, (CM) contextual

meaning, (AVG) appropriate vocabulary and grammar, (TT) turn taking, (ICS) intercultural sensitivity, (PRON) pronunciation, (M) monitoring, (CC) confirmation and clarification, (RP) repeating and paraphrasing, (GEC) gestures and eye contact, and (SC) self-correction. Support is provided in Japanese. When preparing to do the "Conversation Star" task, learners choose one or more of these to focus on during task completion (obviously not all of them are possible since it is not face-to-face communication, and this fact would be discussed with the learners in advance). A related set of tactics are provided to learners and it is these that are used when using "Conversation Star".

How to Populate the Platform

It should be clear that a certain amount of pre-course set-up would be required to make the platform useful for any specific course. That being said, it should be emphasized that the content for most sections of the platform would be provided by the platform itself (by way of the platform provider) and could be used "as is" (the idea here is to save teachers time; researchers and teachers would obviously be able to request that the content be updated, however). Several sections would need teacher-provided content, such as "My Audio Journal", "Conversation Star", and "My Teachers". The first two are course specific. That is, each teacher wishing to incorporate use of the platform into their own courses would need to provide 7-12 topic-related questions for "My Audio Journal" and also 7-12 topic-related tasks for "Conversation Star" for a standard fifteen-week course. Teachers who wished to and had time to would also need to regularly update each class's database using the online tool mentioned earlier to reflect additional participation points that the learners had recently earned. For "My Teachers", teachers at a specific organization would need to receive approval from the Academic Committee to offer such content to learners. If received, each teacher would need to agree to provide the content featured (i.e. a personal video created by the teacher featuring, e.g.: (1) the teacher having a picnic in a park or talking about a specific news topic or performing a specific communicative task around Tokyo or when abroad; (2) a link to a music video or a web page featuring the lyrics of a song he/she likes; and (3) an item of slang) on a regular basis. Further research will undoubtedly reveal what additions can be made to this specific section to maximize its appeal to learners. Teachers would populate the platform using a dedicated web page within the online tool for teachers mentioned earlier.

Discussion

Does it address the theoretical and practical issues outlined earlier?

The current researcher believes that the design of the platform does begin to do so. Though not an exhaustive list, five points are worth noting: (1) it has a sound pedagogical framework (see Hoven & Palalas, 2011) since the relevant literature (i.e. that regarding The L2 Motivational Self System, task-based language teaching, inter-cultural communicative competence, etc.) has been drawn on to inform the design of the core sections of the platform; (2) it seeks to make use of the technology in a way that maximizes its usefulness to the L2 learning process (see Burston, 2015 and Kim & Kwon, 2012); it does this by making use of the device's: microphone, speaker, touchscreen, data storage capabilities, and Internet connectivity and by each section being customized to the needs of that section (e.g. the "Classmate Feedback" section presents a graphical representation and data and also offers functionality essential for exchanging L2-learning-related feedback with classmates) and each section being completely updateable (by the platform provider) so that its design can continue to be based on the relevant literature; the platform could be further developed so other/future device features could be drawn on; (3) it aims to support learners' in-class efforts with class-related between-class content and tasks, with the core tasks seeking to actively engage learners in constructivist learning processes rather than simply having them memorize and reproduce (see Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh, 2011); this should be evidenced by the design of the "My Audio Journal" and "Conversation Star" sections, using which learners construct their own linguistic contributions to answer questions and complete tasks; (4) it should encourage learners to engage in autonomous learning in a collaborative and social way (Kim and Kwon, 2012; Tai, 2012); though currently limited, the design could be updated so that the platform offered learners more opportunities to do this through site/context-specific field work in pairs and/or small groups; and (5) supporting its use with in-class, teacher-fronted follow-up activities should go part of the way in demonstrating the usefulness of smart-phones for language learning (Hsu, 2013).

Possible Effects on L2 Skills, Self-efficacy, and Motivation

Though empirical evidence attesting to the pedagogical effectiveness of the platform cannot as yet be provided, consideration of the potential effects the proposed design may have on learners' L2 skills, self-efficacy, and motivation is of importance here. First,

additional opportunities to produce spoken output should lead to learners engaging in cognitive processes essential for L2 skill development (see Ellis, 2003, pp. 110-115). Further, learners' ongoing self-assessment regarding their global communication (i.e. inter-cultural communicative competence-related) skills - and their efforts to focus on one or more aspects during each speaking task - should lead them to improve the related skills and therefore be better prepared for future authentic inter-cultural communicative contexts. Second, the platform should allow learners to have a range of mastery experiences, which are essential to improving learners' self-efficacy beliefs (see Mills, 2014). This could be achieved, for example, by learners using the "My Audio Journal" section of the platform and then receiving positive feedback from classmates and the teacher in class. A number of other sections should also allow learners to experience success and therefore improve their self-efficacy. Third, having mastery experiences and experiencing success should help to improve learners' sense of competence, and therefore, should lead to improvements in their intrinsic motivation - provided that conditions in the classroom also encourage feelings of autonomy and relatedness (Ushioda, 2014). Further, it should be the case that witnessing such ongoing success will substantiate the learner's future L2 self image and also confirm that it is realistic, and this should motivate his/her continued effort (see Dornyei, 2009) and help him/her to realize that future L2 self image. Being praised and receiving positive feedback from fellow learners when the teacher displays the "My Class" page on the projector screen should be an additional source of reward, and therefore, motivation.

The Ten Principles

As previously mentioned, in their article, Stockwell and Hubbard (2013) provided ten principles to guide MALL innovation and implementation. Principle 2 relates to multi-tasking and environmental distractions. They recommended limiting both. It is proposed here that certain sections of the current platform be used when learners are commuting (that is, during "dead time") as this provides them with an ideal opportunity to pass time in a productive manner while also potentially engaging them. The three sections "Textbook Quizzes", "Badges" (for knowledge), and "My Teachers" (with headphones) could be used in such a situation (though not all learners would use these sections during this time). Where a learner uses a section will depend on the task contained in the section and also the learner. The above also relates to principle 8. Principle 5 relates to accommodating language-learner differences, including differences in learning styles. The design for the current platform does begin to do so, but it is clear that, as a MALL platform, it should

also be possible to incorporate new and different sections, and also varied content within the current sections, to go even further. Principle 9 relates to guidance and training for learners to maximize the effectiveness of an application. As mentioned, a paper-based booklet to provide this prior to learners starting to use the platform should help to provide pre-use training. Ongoing guidance can be provided by teachers at a pre-determined point in each class. Principle 10 relates to the necessity of supporting teachers in their efforts to use the platform in their courses. This could be partly provided through the online tool for teachers that was mentioned at the beginning of this article. Organizational support could be provided by faculties by helping one or two full- and/or part-time teachers to become on-site "geniuses" at using the platform in anticipation of them then becoming go-to sources of information and guidance related to it.

The Japanese Context

As Stockwell (2012) points out, and Hsu (2013) found in his study, that smartphones are devices primarily for communicating and consuming entertainment influences learner perceptions of these devices as tools for language learning. This would appear to be perhaps especially true for Japanese learners. If so, the current researcher would assert that the onus is on MALL developers in Japan *to innovate* (and be evangelists in a way; see Ushioda, 2013) to encourage a change in learner perceptions, and that it may take the development of a MALL platform employing a design similar to the one proposed here to achieve that. This would involve an ongoing engagement with the relevant literature and an ongoing process of modifying and evaluating to hone the design, functionality, and content of the platform. In addition, as journalists Alpeyev and Amano (2015) reveal, makers of non-MALL mobile games maximize the success of those games using a combination of psychology, characters, levels, the offering of new features every so often, electronic rewards (such as giving the user a gift if he/she has logged in again after a long absence), peer pressure, and so on. In a similar vein, learners' willingness to use the current platform regularly, for the variety of tasks required, and for the length of time required could be maximized in part by incorporating such features. It could also be the case that the most "popular" MALL application of the future will blur the lines between task and game, learning and fun. To catch a glimpse of that future, one need only enter a train at rush hour anywhere in Tokyo on any weekday and look at what level of sophistication is keeping commuters (young and old) entertained. It is little wonder that some Japanese learners find the current MALL offerings less than impressive. It would seem prudent to investigate how MALL developers can combine

pedagogically effective design with features that can make MALL innovations something that learners *want* to use (and it is acknowledged that what has been proposed in the current article may still be quite a distance from that).

What follows are screenshots for three additional sections that could be added to the platform (see Images 19, 20, and 21 in Table 3). These sections should be included given the need to motivate learners to use the platform regularly, for the variety of tasks required, and for the length of time required. A layer of game play and teamwork has been added and would incorporate elements such as those listed above, including levels and electronic rewards, and also real-world class rewards.

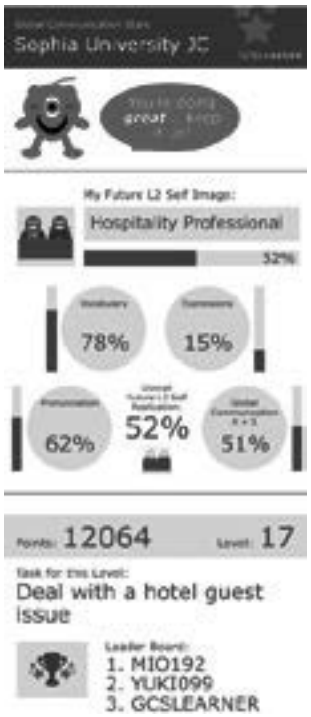
Image 19	My Future	In this section, the learner can choose a representative image for his/her future L2 self (e.g. Hospitality Professional), and he/she can work towards becoming this both within a single course and across courses while at his/her institution. Through doing things like completing small goals, recording audio journal entries, etc., the learner earns points to continue to play a game related to his/her chosen future L2 self image (that is, if he/she does not have sufficient points, he/she cannot proceed to the next level; this is obviously not strictly enforceable, but it should be encouragement enough for most learners). Within the game, there is one overall task for each level (e.g. Deal with a hotel guest issue), and all of these relate to the learner's future L2 self image. He/She completes the task to proceed to the next level. The task and its sub-tasks display in a separate section (see Image 20). The extent of the learner's overall future L2 self "realization" (that is, the virtual/graphical	

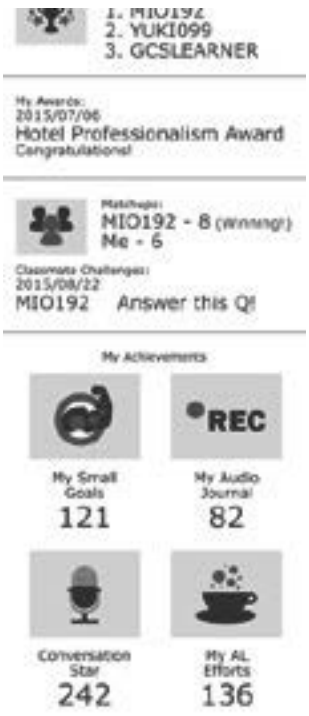
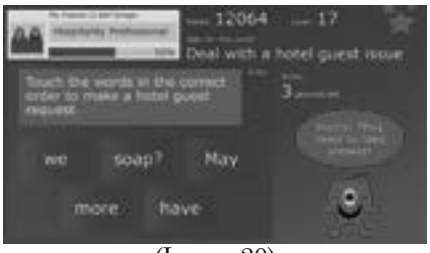
Image 19	My Future	representation of it in Image 19) need not depend only on the learner's use of the platform; in-class assessment by teachers and learner self-assessment could also help to determine this. This section also displays any automated electronic "awards" the learner has received because of his/her efforts. These are awarded after the learner completes a certain number of levels or specific types of tasks. Further, this section allows learners to send each other challenges to do which are related to their future L2 self image. They send a question to be answered, a joke to be understood, etc. All of this content is supplied by the platform itself, not the learner. Challenges such as these may not be of much pedagogical value, but they should motivate continued effort and continue to activate the learner's future L2 self image, and they could also be enjoyable to do during "dead time".	 (Image 19)
Image 20	Game	In this section, the learner is required to demonstrate his/her mastery of task-related vocabulary, expressions, pronunciation, and global communication-related knowledge and skills (or learn these through completing the task).	 (Image 20)

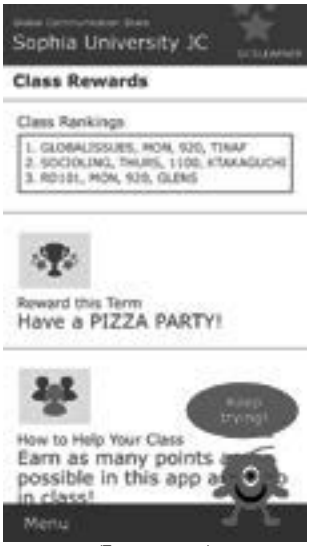
Image 21	Class Rewards	In this section, the learner can see information related to how his/her class is currently ranked against other classes at his/her institution. The top three classes for the term earn something like a pizza party. This is determined by ranking the total number of points each class of learners accumulates in the platform. This section should promote group cohesiveness, which should prove motivating (Dornyei, 2001). Note that since points are accumulated by individual learners as a result of effort *and* achievement - it could motivate even lower-level and/or less-motivated learners to put in more effort. (In addition, any runner-up class that reaches their class-determined total points target could also earn a reward.)	 (Image 21)

Table 3: Three additional sections that add an extra layer of game play and teamwork

Ushioda (2013) notes theoretical arguments that imply "the importance of internally driven forms of motivation, since these reflect personal control and autonomy in the learning process and generally lead to high quality engagement in learning" and "the need to provide choice, flexibility and autonomy in how students work with mobile technologies" (p. 2). Accordingly, no matter how potentially motivating the platform becomes as a result of additions such as game play and teamwork, learners may still need to be given a considerable degree of autonomy related to how central the platform is to their course and to the determination of their final grade, and also which sections they use, how often, when, and with whom.

MALL Platform or No MALL Platform?

In Kukulska-Hulme, Norris, and Donohue (2015), the researchers introduce a framework for mobile-assisted language teaching and learning. They present ideas for

personalizing course materials through using a mobile device, taking into consideration things such as device features, learner-generated contexts of language use, rehearsal, learner outcomes, and learner self-reflection (p. 12). They note that a mobile device can be used to record video and take photos to make powerful use of out-of-class learning contexts. Elsewhere in the document, they list free apps that could be used for MALL. This should serve to caution that a MALL platform like the one proposed here may never be able to offer the full range of features offered across the many different types of mobile applications available. Instead, the platform should seek to offer that combination of features specifically needed to facilitate the L2 learning process, but which is not available elsewhere (and also those features perhaps available elsewhere, but which could use customizing and simplifying to suit the specific needs of L2 learners). Any future research related to MALL platform design should proceed with this in mind (in the current researcher's opinion).

Having said the above, it is a certainty that individual teachers and researchers, specific educational institutions, and publishing companies will design and develop smart-phone applications specifically for MALL use. What would in part make the current platform *a platform* would be it having the capacity to connect with such applications and incorporate performance data from them so that it could be used by learners to better manage their L2 learning (e.g. if a learner was using three different MALL applications on his/her smart-phone for learning vocabulary, all three could connect to the platform, with the relevant data from each influencing the learners' performance indicators in the platform). One additional possibility is providing the ability for a researcher to propose a new section that he/she thinks should be added to the platform itself and for the researcher to design it him/herself. The section could then be developed and added to the platform by the platform provider. The researcher could then conduct both informal and experimental research with the newly added section to assess the pedagogical effectiveness of it. In this way, the platform could become an additional tool for conducting MALL-related research.

Limitations

As Burston (2015) and Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, and Freynik (2014) remind us, there are a dearth of empirical MALL studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of MALL innovations for improving the L2 ability of users. Burston points out that inadequate research design contributes to the problem (p. 16). Providing

empirical evidence attesting to the pedagogical effectiveness of the platform goes beyond the scope of this article. However, it will be the focus of the next step in this line of research. Incorporating adequate research design will be a particular focus of those future research efforts. It should be noted here that *how* the different sections of the platform are implemented by teachers will contribute significantly to how pedagogically effective they are. Therefore, considerable experimentation will be needed to determine the most effective implementation of each section.

Pedagogical Implications for Individual Teachers and for Organizations

If proven effective, use of the platform could have benefits for each individual teacher's classroom. Such benefits could include a better accommodation of learning styles, a more varied selection of assessment opportunities (whether or not one or more sections of the platform could be used for assessment purposes may need to be decided in consultation with the learners themselves, however), and more motivated learners. Its use could also have benefits for organizations. They could encourage use of the platform by teachers responsible for different class types (being careful not to overwhelm learners) for the purposes of standardizing practice at the organization, standardizing service for the learners (as customers), ensuring that all communication-skills-focused courses included elements drawn from the relevant literature and essential to the L2 learning process (including peer review and feedback, autonomous learning, and ongoing self-reflection and self-assessment of global communication (i.e. inter-cultural communicative competence-related) skills by learners), and helping to support teachers in their efforts to collaborate and improve their own practice and also standards at the organization. However, given that a lack of autonomy can be a source of demotivation for teachers (see e.g. Bier, 2014), it would be essential to include teachers in as much of the decision making and planning process as possible.

Conclusion

In this article, the design for a MALL application which could also serve as a MALL *platform* for smart-phones and be used to help co-ordinate learners' total in- and between-class L2 learning experience was proposed. The current researcher drew on the relevant literature to ensure that the design of the platform would be as useful as possible to the L2 teaching and learning process, and it is hoped that the platform,

when developed and implemented, will offer a variety of affordances which could help learners to improve their L2 communication skills, their sense of self-efficacy, and their motivation. The next step in this line of research will involve development of the platform and an initial attempt to implement its use within one or more tertiary-level courses in a study incorporating a rigorous (and experimental) research design.

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