Summer FL Fun with Mobile Apps

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Summer is coming, and we all want our students to keep on learning throughout the vacation, so they won't have forgotten everything they've learned in the previous year when September rolls around. How can they keep up with their language over the summer? What better way than apps they can load onto the devices that are almost constantly in their hands – their mobile phones? This month's column reviews some handy apps that provide practice and learning opportunities in a mobile form or on a computer.

Let's start with iPad/iPhone apps: If you go to the iTunes App Store on your iPhone or iPad you can find *Play2learn Spanish HD* [ClearVision Sp. Z.o.o., $1.99] This game-like app is designed for children ages 3 to 12 years old. The program uses native speakers for the audio. Find it in a browser at (http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/play2learn-spanish-hd/id377328401?mt=8)

Mango Languages http://www.mangolanguages.com offers 39 languages (including special version of ESL software for learners from particular backgrounds, and even 'Pirate Language!') and it's free with a library login or can be purchased. Look for your local library here http://www.mangolanguages.com/store/library_locator/ Once you have found out if your library has Mango, or have purchased a license, you can use it on a mobile: http://www.mangolanguages.com/libraries/products-overview/mango-mobile/

Transparent Language's *Before You Know it* (BYKI) flash card program http://www.byki.com/ allows learners to download flashcard sets that others have created. The interface structures different types of practice with the 'cards' and I found many for Arabic; these often include audio files and a way to record your own voice, so the practice includes listening as well as speaking practice. A free version is at http://www.byki.com/fls/FLS.html and on the Android you can look for BYKI in the Play Store. Find the language you want and download and install the app. It's 7.99. A free version, Byki Community Edition, is available under certain conditions: You will need a code which can be gotten from a participating library or school.

Other languages available Japanese: Real Kana http://www.realkana.com/ has an iPhone app for 2.99 that allows users to learn Hiragana and Katakana.

Free Spanish Audio FlashCards **http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/free-spanish-audio-flashcards/id304771426?mt=8** for iPad is offered by Declan Software, as is a free online Spanish word of the day: http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/spanish-word-of-the-day/id289898664?mt=8 . There are several Spanish dictionaries available through the App Store, too.

Now lets move on to web-based programs for your computer: The most recent tool "**Language Immersion for Chrome**" was announced in early May by Google http://www.engadget.com/2012/05/02/google-language-immersion-chrome-extension/ . Installed as an extension to Chrome it works this way: while reading anything online, one can choose to have random phrases from the text translated into the language being studied. This results in an interesting mash-up, as they say in the geek world. To hear what it sounds like being read aloud, see the video at http://youtu.be/FrEzKtjKVio Below is a screen shot showing the preference menu and the report on this app translated at the intermediate level for Spanish. See the tutorial on installing this below.*

Language Immersion
for Google Chrome

Pick a language

Afrikaans

Pick an immersion level

NOVICE   INTERMEDIATE   FLUENT

ON   OFF

Berlitz puede ser la mejor way to learn a foreign language, but la mayoría de nosotros have neither the tiempo ni the ability to fully immerse ourselves in the vocabulary of otro país. Hot on the heels of Gmail's automatic translation feature hitting the big time, Google's Translateteam ha creado una Chrome extension para hacer language learning un poco más accesible. The extension hace el truco by translating random portions of text to any of its 64 supported languages, de modo que su native tongue is interspersed with the lingo you're learning. Users have a sliding scale para establecer su knowledge level from novice to fluent, and puede darse la vuelta translated words para escuchar how they se debe pronunciar. Interested? Peep una demostración en vídeo after the break para verlo en action, or dar el salto and install it at the source below.

Teachers Can Have Fun, too!
As teachers, we can use the summer months to gather ideas for enhancing our classes in the coming school year. One such resource is Curriki – a curriculum sharing site http://www.curriki.org/. Lesson plans are organized by grade level and language and are free to download.

Merlot World Languages Portal: This site hosts a vast array of lesson plans, professional development resources, and student learning materials that are peer-reviewed. Go to the materials section http://www.merlot.org/merlot/materials.htm?category=2440 and choose from the list of 14 languages on the left side. Although MERLOT is designed primarily for university language instruction, secondary educators will find great lessons, activity and discussion ideas. For example, there is a nice section of tips for using technology to teach world languages here http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm that covers individual work, pair and small group work, and whole-class activity.

Another place to explore is http://edsitement.neh.gov/subject/foreign-language by **National Endowment for the Humanities** (NEH). Lesson plans and thematic units from a variety of cultures are available here.

I hope you get some time AWAY from the computer this summer, but when you have some time to kill off the beach, try some mobile apps and encourage your students to keep learning while school's out for the summer!

* Tutorial on installing the "Language Immersion for Chrome" app:

1. Make sure you have downloaded and installed "Chrome" as a browser on your computer. If you haven't used Chrome yet, and wonder why you need yet another browser, I think you'll be surprised at how much faster it is; it is also more reliable than the others available. Start by downloading Chrome at https://www.google.com/chrome
2. When you have opened Chrome, go to https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/bedbecnakfcpmkpddjfnfihogkaggkhl to get the Language Immersion for Chrome extension. Click on "Add to Chrome"
3. Restart Chrome after installation and you will see an icon in the toolbar to the far right of the screen, like this: Click on it to open the control panel for the Language Immersion extension and choose your language and proficiency level.