



GLOBAL MLearning Course.

Session 1 – What is MLearning?

Mlearning? What's that?

First of all, before we go any further, it may be worth examining what MLearning actually means. The 'M' stands for mobile. Mobile learning is learning that takes place using a handheld, mobile technological device. "Learning using mobile phones" I hear you say. Yes, but not entirely. Mobile devices now include much more than phones. There are the smartphones (e.g. blackberry, iphone), tablet computers (the ipad, the Galaxy tab), digital readers (e.g. Sony e-reader, Kindle) and netbooks. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that these other devices will be far more common in educational circles in the future than phones.

Why is this a hot topic now?

According to the Horizon report (<http://wp.nmc.org/horizon2011/>), which "examines emerging technologies for their potential impact on and use in teaching, learning, and creative inquiry", there are several reasons why mlearning might be "coming of age". The first is that the price of the devices is coming down quickly. While higher-end products like Apple's iPad are still quite expensive, we are beginning to see cheaper tablet computers more and more. Netbooks, like the Acer or Dell ones, now feature in back-to-school catalogues and cost less than \$200. Smartphones used to be just for business people, now they are favoured by teenagers in more and more places. And when Amazon slashed the price of its new Kindle e-reader to around 100 pounds, it became one of the quickest selling items in the UK.

Secondly, many of these devices are experiencing convergence. Convergence means that your handheld device is a combination of a bunch of other separate gadgets you may have had. Your computer, digital camera, video camera, telephone, GPS and game console are now all in one device. And it connects to the internet.

Finally, there is what is curiously called the 21st century button. In the past, these devices were too small to really work on (the keyboard was tiny). Now new devices are not only bigger, they rely on touch screen. This means that writing with them is becoming easier, and in some cases you don't even need to use a keyboard. And in the future, we may be able to interact with these devices using gestures and voice.

The combination of all these mean that people are increasingly expecting to learn and study wherever and whenever they want.

And the connection with Global is...?

Well, I've been interested in this aspect of learning since we began developing the e-workbook for Global. I've also worked with some of the educators in our field who are becoming specialists in this area and it's great to explore new territory. Finally, I believe that some of the elements of mlearning can truly be beneficial to our learners, especially in the area of exposure to English outside the classroom.

So please join us as we explore this new area in our field! There will be regular blogposts about different aspects of mlearning and plenty of resources and ideas for you to start doing this in your classes right away!