



## **Mobile Language Learning: First Results from the Italian Research Unit of The SIMOLA Project**

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The SIMOLA (Situating Mobile Language Learning) project [1] is a LLP KA3 project aiming at experimenting the learning potential of a special software called LingoBee and developed by the project leader, the University of Brighton, UK.

LingoBee runs on Android mobile phones and allows users - living in the country where the target language is spoken, hence the adjective "situated" for the type of learning - to create and share lexical multi-medial entries in the target language. In so doing, the community co-creates a sort of multi-medial shared lexicon in the target language, being inspired by the daily life in the new context: an odd term or a fun expression, just like a beautiful unexpected landscape, can be the trigger for creating a new item, adding picture, web-links and audio-comments to a personalized definition (to be given also in the mother tongue).

The Italian SIMOLA research unit is charged with testing LingoBee with two groups of Erasmus students that are taught Italian as Second Language during a term course. In this way, the potential of the software can be investigated also as a tool to enhance formal learning and teaching. The points at issues, within this perspective, are mainly: a) if there is a correlation between the acquisition level of the new language and the use of LingoBee; b) which kind of use did the users make of the software; c) which are the limits and the benefits of the new tool tested, especially in terms of a new kind of language didactics.

The first trial phase (coming to the end while writing this abstract) has been conducted with a group of 10 students with Spanish as L1. They all came to Italy without knowing Italian. This group generated about 100 entries, mainly related to daily student life and to the study and (for those studying nursing) internship context. Even if there is still no clear correlation between the proficiency in Italian and the participation level, it is very interesting the way they used the software to create items. All the entries are picture-based – often in original and iconic ways, like the one composing the Italian word for lentils with real lentils on a table - while none of them has audio-comments. The majority of them are not shaped like standard definitions (e.g.: "X means Y", or "X is made of...") but like captions or ostensive-like definitions.

These first outcomes suggest that there is a great room for using this kind of software for learning languages in the 2.0 era, and also that creativity and collaboration can really be key-terms for a new kind of pedagogy. We also have to take into account the affectivity of this tools in enhancing learning, by measuring their effects and by getting precise evidences of their benefits.