

Ipad Pilot - Trinity College – Spring 2011

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Project Report

1. What were your initial classroom and/or research goals in working with the tablet device?

My motivation to participate in this pilot project was twofold: a) to familiarize myself with the iPad and its operating system while exploring its applications for teaching and research, and b) to test the functionality and pedagogical value of some of the language Apps currently available for the iPad/iPhone.

2. Were you successful in achieving these goals? Did you modify your objectives as you began to use the device?

During the spring 2011 semester I taught an intensive introductory language course in the Blume Center. In line with my initial goals, I tested several note taking, concept mapping, and presentation Apps to help me organize and prepare my lessons. I also found it very useful to access online resources such as Moodle, YouTube and GoogleDocs from anywhere with WIFI coverage. Besides, the textbook publisher makes available the entire textbook via their online Portal (<http://www.mhcentro.com/books>), albeit not as a stand-alone App. Lastly, I evaluated several language Apps (some free, some purchased) to help my students develop their vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening skills.

I successfully achieved my stated goals but did modify my initial ambitions as I learned more about the device and its shortcomings. Some of these shortcomings have since been dealt with in the latest version of the iPad.

3. What applications did you find to be useful? Were you able to use any of these applications in the classroom or laboratory? Describe what worked well and what did not work out as anticipated.

As I mentioned above, I tested a variety of applications to evaluate the potential of this platform for language teaching and learning. There are many basic Apps to help language learners with basic phrases and limited communicative tasks. These are usually free and of limited benefit to my students. The Apps in the next tier are much more feature and content-rich. Here is a selection of the ones I installed:

Sample language Apps:	Sample teaching Apps:	Sample research Apps:
Busuu	Dropbox	Evernote
Babbel	iTalk	Idea sketch
Hello-hello	Remote	Cloudreader
Pleco	Keynote	GoogleBooks
Skype	Air Sketch	

4. What technical problems/pitfalls did you encounter?

Here are the main technical issues I ran into:

- Safari window limitation. After nine windows, the earlier ones are closed automatically
- Flash-based content is not accessible.
- Projection is cumbersome and unintuitive. Audio is only available through the device.
- Typing is hard to master
- Multitasking between Apps is not available

5. Based on this early evaluation, what do you foresee as the future of tablet devices in the classroom or laboratory setting? Advantages? Limitations? Would you use the device again?

In my opinion, the main strengths of these tablet devices are:

- Their portability: form factor, weight, etc.
- The ability to easily transfer files (e.g. pdfs, audio and video recordings) back and forth between the device and a desktop computer
- Their integration with new web-based services and cloud-based computing
- As a viable replacement for expensive Symposium-like systems
- The availability of Apps to easily work with multimedia pdfs, online magazines, RSS feeds as well as textbooks specifically designed for the iPad

At the same time there are numerous challenges for its successful integration in a classroom setting:

- The current iOS is far more limited than a full-fledged desktop computer (e.g. file management, multitasking, overall user experience)
- The projection capabilities are cumbersome to say the least. Teachers need a foolproof system and this version of the iPad is not intuitive enough.
- Textbook pagination is problematic when the online version of a book doesn't follow the same page numbers as the paper version
- Web browsing is limited to Safari and nine open windows at any given time. Depending on your teaching style and needs, this can be a deal breaker.
- Flash-based content is not accessible
- Typing is slow and error-prone.
- Students would have to have a similar device to level the playing field and ensure that they remain on task

In terms of continued use on my part, it'll very much depend on the course I'm teaching and the classroom I'm in. Teaching in the Blume Center made the use of a tablet device somewhat cumbersome and redundant. However, in a different setting the iPad can certainly shine. For example, I found the Air Sketch App a great mobile alternative to the Symposium with the added benefit that students can easily participate in a given activity. The ability to video record is also a welcome feature in the new iPad. All in all, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to have tested this device, learned about the variety of software available for this platform, and the challenge to think about how one may take advantage of it in teaching and research. As we can see with the new version of the iPad and Android alternatives, it's only bound to get better.