

## **MobLang—Learning Foreign Languages via Mobile: How End Users Needs and Preferences Influence the Technical Development**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Introduction**

Language barriers between individuals of different ethnic groups living in the same country, or Europeans visiting other countries, hinder natural interaction. Communication in a foreign language can hold back the establishment of friendships and closer relationships, thus preventing fruitful intercultural exchange and dialogue. Basic language knowledge of one's conversational partner is usually appreciated and creates a comforting atmosphere. However, today's Europeans are too busy to attend a language class.

Exploiting technology and especially the recently emerging developments in mobile learning offer a viable alternative. Mobile phones are optimal learning tools that enable people to learn anytime, anywhere, and at their one own pace, even during leisure time.

MobLang ([www.moblang.eu](http://www.moblang.eu)) is an innovative foreign language teaching and learning tool aiming at designing, developing, and publishing language learning courses delivered via the mobile phone. MobLang applies Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) to support the following less frequently used and taught languages: Basque in the Basque country, Turkish and Greek in Cyprus, Albanian and Turkish in Greece, and Irish in Northern Ireland. Potential target groups are part of MobLang's development phase so as to ensure that the final mobile language course will be of interest, value, and usefulness to the end users.

#### **End Users' Needs and Preferences**

Different target groups have been identified in the participating countries. In order to investigate their needs, preferences, and mobile usage characteristics two methodological approaches were chosen to collect data: (1) survey and (2) focus group.

**Survey.** 339 interested individuals (211 females and 123 males) participated in the survey so far, with more filled-in questionnaires being returned. The majority of the participants belonged to the 19-30 age group (40%), indicating that young adults are mostly the ones who showed interest in MobLang. However, the age groups 31-40 and 40+ also have a significant number of people which cannot be ignored (31% and 23% respectively).

Preliminary results show that the great majority (74%) use the Internet on a daily basis. Moreover, most participants (40%) own a mobile phone that is capable of connecting to the Internet, however, only 25% do so. The most quoted reason for not connecting to the Internet via the mobile is its



expensiveness. The most popular material to be included into the course is survival questions / phrases as well as short basic dialogues.

Focus Group. The focus groups are taking place at the moment; the results will be analyzed after the completion of them and will be presented at the conference.

### **Technical Development**

Besides knowledge and expertise in mobile learning solutions the results of the survey and focus groups with the end users feed into the development of the technical background requirements of MobLang which itself is in its developmental phase. More details about the technical requirements and how end users influenced them will be presented at the conference.