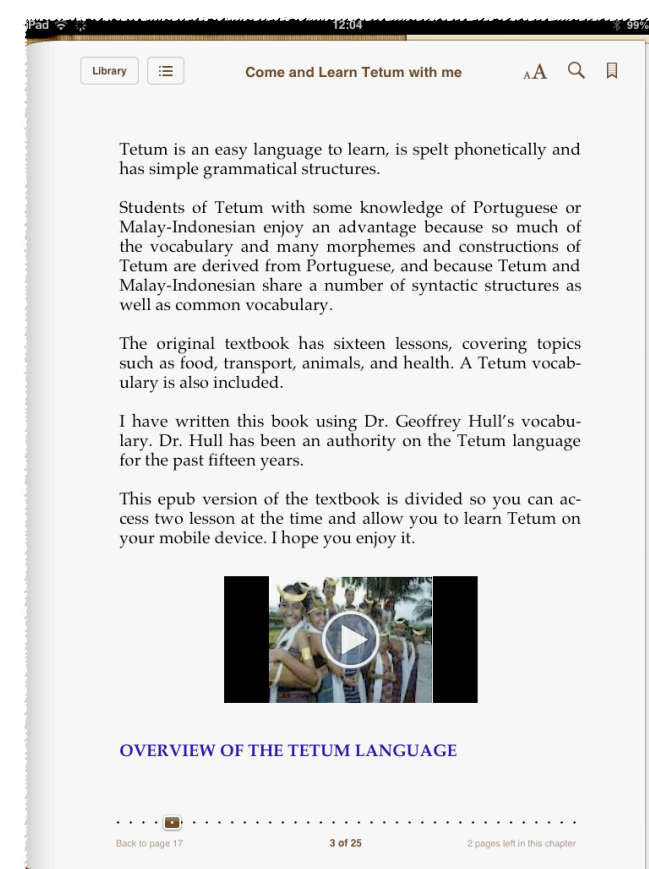
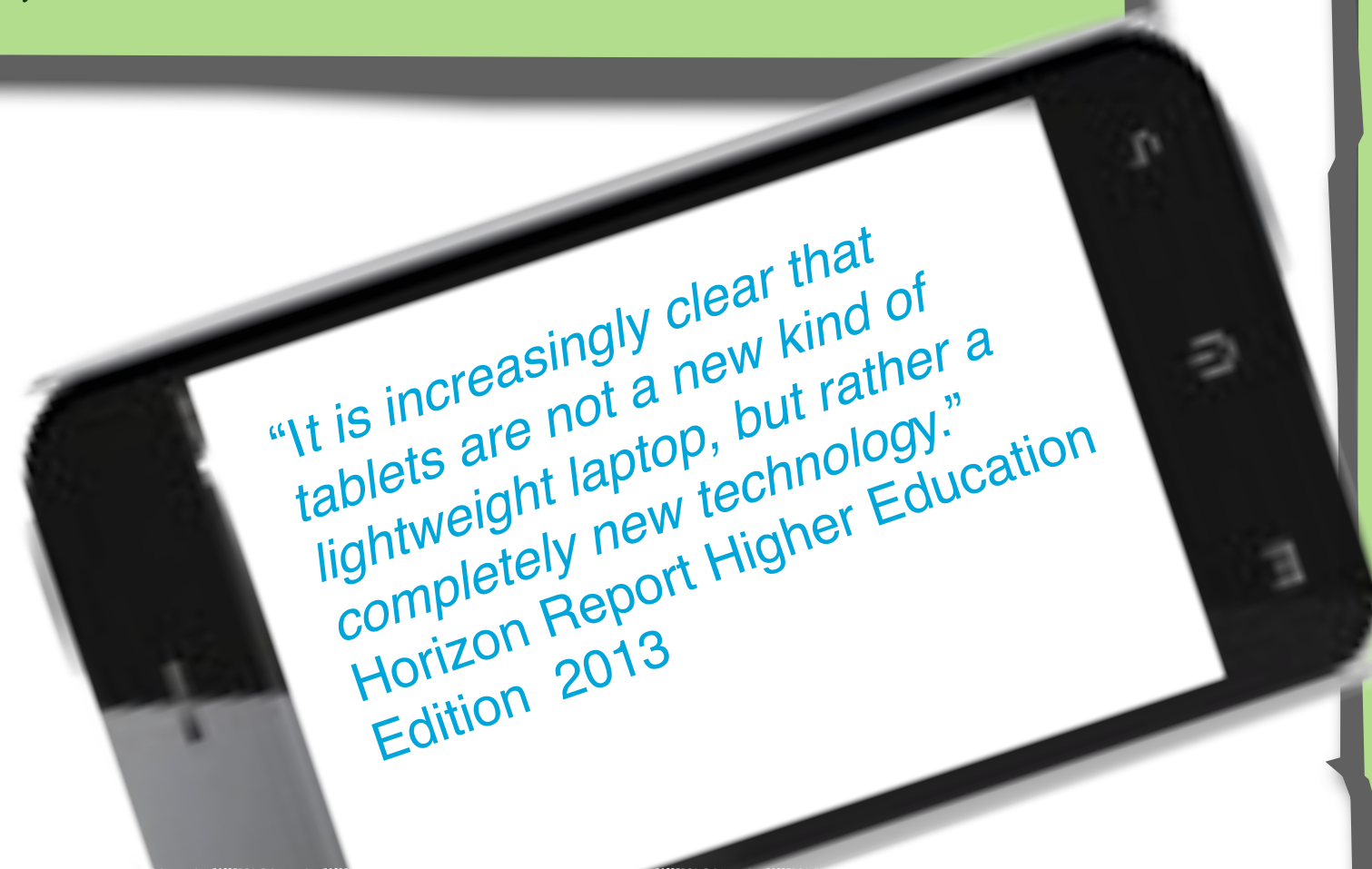


Language in my pocket



Background to the project

In 2012 the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University started a project to support small enrollment languages using online delivery and blended learning models. As a consequence, the idea came about to move some of the online content in a format that could be easily accessed on mobile devices when a group of students were going overseas on a study tour in Thailand and needed to revise/access language resources in remote areas with no internet access. The epub created for this purpose was very successful and although the students using it were impressed we believed that it could still be refined and improved. The next phase was to use a similar approach to create a freestanding first-year Sanskrit syllabus that incorporated text, audio and video components for the 2013 academic year.



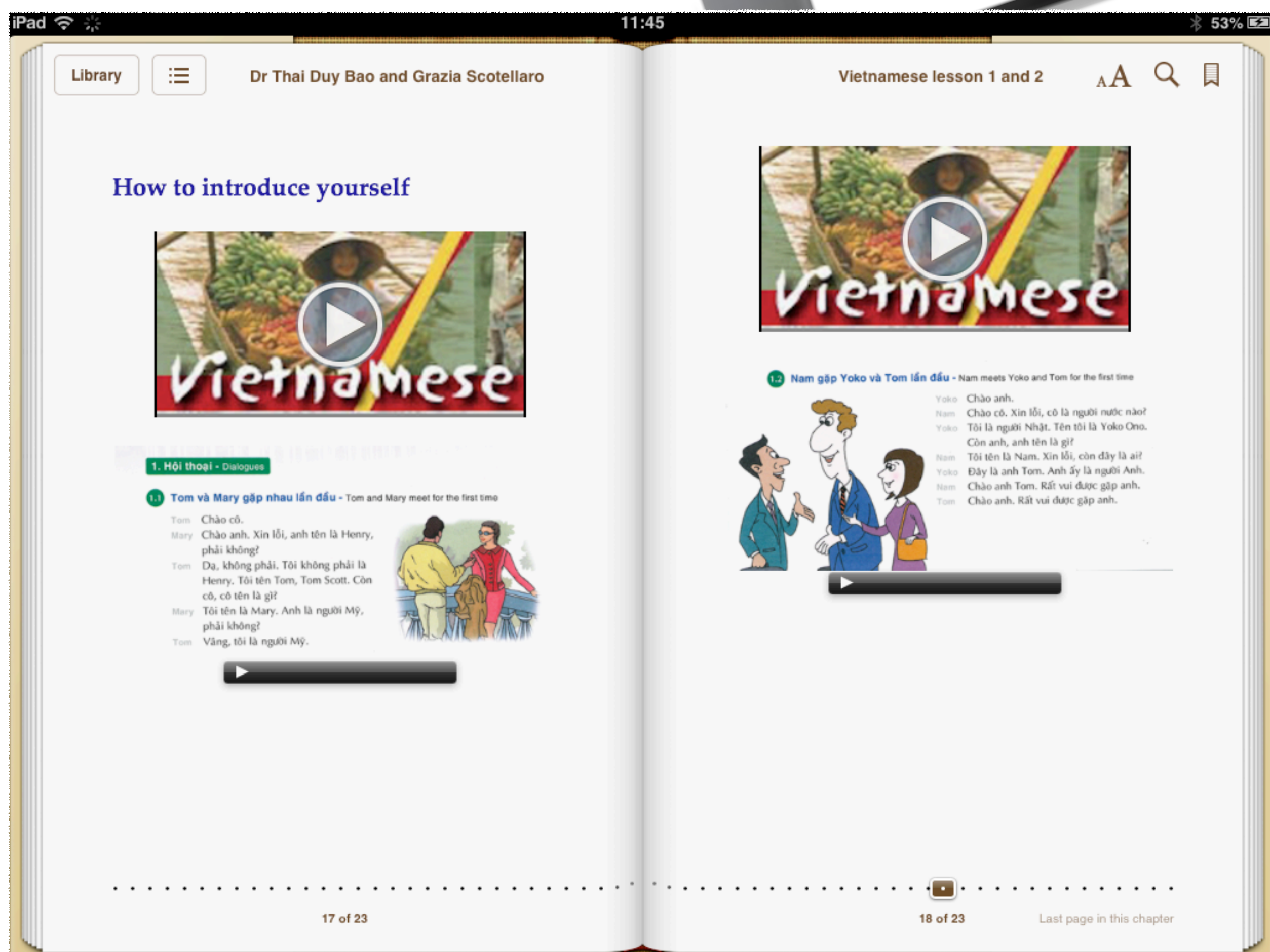
Grazia Scotellaro
Digital Learning Advisor
Digital Learning Project
College of Asia and the Pacific
Australian National University

Method

We researched a better, more simpler way to create multimedia epubs. Although the Thai prototype had shown some success it was also clear that producing larger and more complex publications with this method was not the answer. We also had to decide, in close collaboration and discussion with the academics involved, on what devices these publications needed to work on. The choice of software, formatting and interactivity depended on either a narrow range of devices (e.g only iPads) or larger range of devices (including androids).

The final decision was to go for the widest possible range of devices keeping the publication simple but still interactive utilizing app native features in the books (e.g full screen videos, zooming of images, note facilities, etc).

It was also decided that the epub would work closely with the online materials students accessed via the web, the epub would therefore be the "mobile textbook" but all activities and assessment would still be delivered via the web. We wanted to achieve a nice balance of online /offline interaction keeping in mind that the most expensive and time consuming component of the course materials (video and audio) were all included in the epub.



Results

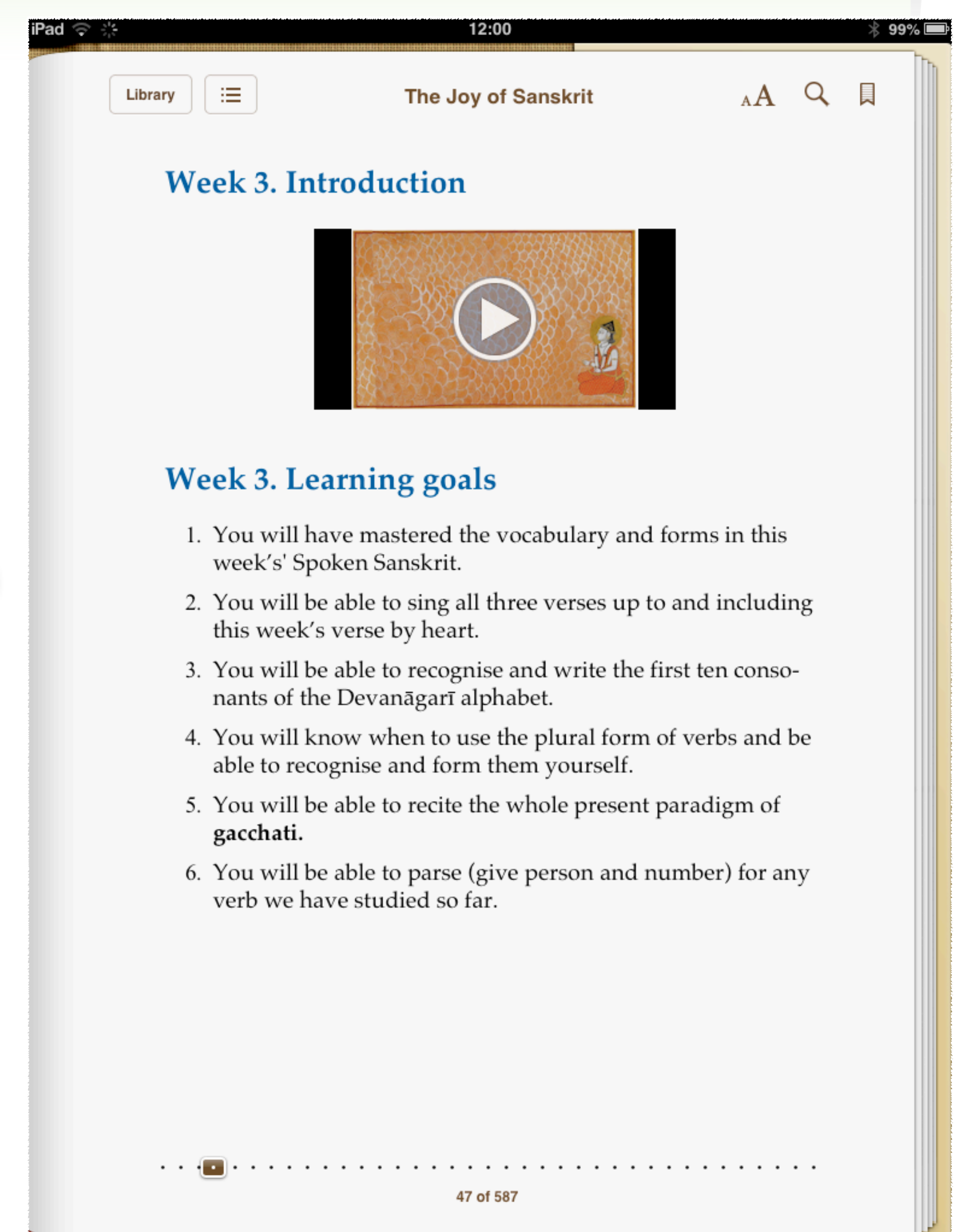
The courses currently using the combination of online materials and epub textbooks are Sanskrit, Vietnamese, Tetum and Thai but the plan is to add other languages next year. This is how the project has developed so far:

The Sanskrit epub was developed using materials from a textbook enriched with video and audio and was completed in time for the start of semester 1 2013. The entire course materials for both semesters comprising of 12 chapters (650 pages) is currently used by 20 students, many of them outside Australia.

The Vietnamese epub also uses materials from a textbook enriched with video and audio but the publication is delivered in two lesson segments every two weeks, downloadable directly from the course learning management system (Moodle).

The Tetum epub is a little different as the textbook was written by the academic teaching the course. The epub is therefore the original textbook with multimedia added, also delivered in two lesson segments every two weeks from the course learning management system.

The Thai epub, as the prototype for this project, it is currently being reviewed for an updated version to be completed for later in the year.



Conclusion and Further info

Taking advantage of learning opportunities offered by mobile devices is a must if we seriously want to engage the students of today and tomorrow. This project is only in the early stages but we can already see the potential and benefits of using mobile devices in supporting small enrollment languages. Student's feedback, so far, has been very positive and we believe that a similar approach could work in other contexts. We are still researching the best way to make the materials available to students and one option that seems to be appropriate is to deploy the books via iTunesU but there are also other possibilities we are canvassing at this point. If you would like to know more about this project please email me at grazia.scotellaro@anu.edu.au

References:

<http://www.nmc.org/publications/2013-horizon-report-higher-ed>

Images: <http://www.freepik.com>

