Design and Use of Mobile Technology in
Distance Language Education
Matching Learning Practices with Technologies-in-Practice

av

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Abstract


This thesis focuses on the adaptation of formal education to people’s technology-use patterns, their technology-in-practice, where the ubiquitous use of mobile technologies is central. The research question is: How can language learning practices occurring in informal learning environments be effectively integrated with formal education through the use of mobile technology? The study investigates the technical, pedagogical, social and cultural challenges involved in a design science approach.

The thesis consists of four studies. The first study systematises MALL (mobile-assisted language learning) research. The second investigates Swedish and Chinese students’ attitudes towards the use of mobile technology in education. The third examines students’ use of technology in an online language course, with a specific focus on their learning practices in informal learning contexts and their understanding of how this use guides their learning. Based on the findings, a specifically designed MALL application was built and used in two courses. Study four analyses the app use in terms of students’ perceived level of self-regulation and structuration.

The studies show that technology itself plays a very important role in reshaping peoples’ attitudes and that new learning methods are co-constructed in a sociotechnical system. Technology’s influence on student practices is equally strong across borders. Students’ established technologies-in-practice guide the ways they approach learning. Hence, designing effective online distance education involves three interrelated elements: technology, information, and social arrangements. This thesis contributes to mobile learning research by offering empirically and theoretically grounded insights that shift the focus from technology design to design of information systems.

Keywords: online distance education, mobile learning, mobile-assisted language learning, information systems artefact, design science research, learning practices, structuration, self-regulation, technology-in-practice.

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