

An analysis of adult
language learning in
informal settings.
The role of mobile learning.
Review of the use of
mobile devices for
non-formal learning.



TELL-OP Intellectual
Output 6-A1



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TELL-OP is a Strategic Partnership that aims to improve European formal and HE learning by using ICT-assisted personalized language learning in mobile devices through the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies and Open Educational Resources (OER).

The main purposes of this study are to bridge the gap between the possibilities offered by ICTs and the huge demand for ubiquitous language learning; to consider the challenges and opportunities of recognition of learning achievements through open learning and, last but not least, to inform the debate concerning recognition of open learning and indicate the types of recognition practices in existence, and the factors that influence them.

An unabridged version of these policy recommendations can be found on the following URL:

<http://www.tellop.eu/output-6>



TYPES OF LEARNING: FORMAL, INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL

Learning can be classified into three main categories: formal learning, informal learning and non-formal learning:

- **Formal learning** is learning that occurs in an organised and structured context and is explicitly designated as learning in terms of objectives, time or resources. It is intentional from the learner's point of view, and typically leads to validation and certification.
- **Informal learning** is learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is mostly unintentional from the learner's perspective. It is not structured, non-intentional and does not lead to certification.
- **Non-formal learning** is learning which is embedded in planned activities not always explicitly designated as learning in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support, but which contain an important learning element. Self-directed informal learning is not completely divorced from the non-formal learning that takes place in adult education provision.

In order to establish a solid background on everything this study will deal with, various definitions will be explained below:

- **Accreditation** is a process by which an officially approved body, on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes and/or competences according to different purposes and methods, awards qualifications, or grants equivalences, credit units or exemptions, or issues documents such as portfolios of competences.
- **Credentialisation** is the award of academic credentials of any sort, by an academic institution, usually on the basis of completed assessment.
- **Competences** indicate a satisfactory state of knowledge, skills and attitudes and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations.
- **Qualification** is an official record of learning achievement, which recognises the results of all forms of learning. It can also be a condition that must be met or complied with for an individual to enter or progress in an occupation and/or for further learning.
- **Validation** is the confirmation by an officially approved body that learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment

TYPES OF LEARNING: FORMAL, INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL

methodologies.

- **Recognition of learning** is a process of granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value in society.
- **Learning outcomes** are the set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process.
- **Learning achievements** are similar to learning outcomes, but normally self-initiated by the learner, not pre-defined by a set curriculum.
- **Open learning** has a slightly different sense than open education in this report. Where 'open learning' is used, there is an implication that the learner has agency, whereas 'open education' is used when providers are the stated or implied agents.
- **Open educational resources** and open educational practices have their antecedents in many areas: the drive towards open sharing of creative works and software through Creative Commons and free and shareware, the growth of digital repositories for teachers to share their materials under open licences, and the policies of research funding bodies, for open access to data outputs and the subsequent provision of data services to enable these.



MOOCs are heading to become a significant and possibly a standard element of credentialed University education. Although credit for completion has not been a major motivation for learners up to this point, there is an increasing demand for the HE sector to provide flexible pathways to learning and accessible affordable learning. In order for MOOCs and learning through open educational approaches to have a meaningful impact on learners and society in general, mechanisms need to be developed for learners to obtain formal recognition for their learning

TYPES OF LEARNING: FORMAL, INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL

achievements. Formal recognition of non-formal, open learning can fast-track learners through traditional education programmes and enable them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge to employers.

There are three main routes for recognition of non-formal, open learning:

- Universities may provide exemption from a course/ module upon receiving evidence of successful completion of a MOOC.
- If the above conditions are not met, a university may agree to exempt a student from attendance on a course, but require the student to take an examination. (In this case it is the exempting university providing the examination, not the MOOC provider.)
- There is a form of CPD available to members of occupational groups in the Netherlands in which learners can be awarded 'Permanent Credits' on the basis of a certain number of hours' or days' attendance at job-related training courses. In these instances, MOOC providers would only need to estimate the notional training hours the MOOC is equivalent to.

The OpenCred project developed a framework for analysing the recognition of open learning was developed comprising the following four domains:

- » **Formality of recognition**
- » **Robustness of assessment**
- » **Affordability for learner**
- » **Eligibility for assessment/recognition**

The potential of MOOCs as a means to promote accessibility and affordability for all is constrained by the problem of providing high value for low cost. Formal qualifications require robust assessment; otherwise the value of the qualifications is undermined. Robust assessment requires tutor intervention to assess in-depth learning, as automated assessment can only judge superficial learning. Tutors cost money, but the ideal of open education is that it is free, and therefore robust assessment does not appear to fit neatly within current business models for MOOCs or open education in general.

MOBILE LEARNING

Smartphones and tablets are now practically ubiquitous, and we have practically near ubiquitous wifi connectivity. They are now much more affordable, robust, light and with a good battery life. There is a range of excellent Apps available to support communication, productivity, curation and learning.

Since the inception of mobile devices, the premise of mobile and ubiquitous learning has always been present. Thus we could list ten characteristics of mobile-assisted seamless learning:

- Encompassing formal and informal learning.
- Encompassing personalised and social learning.
- Across time.
- Across locations.
- Ubiquitous access to learning resources.
- Encompassing physical and digital objects.
- Combined use of multiple device types.
- Seamless switching between multiple learning tasks
- Knowledge synthesis.
- Encompassing multiple pedagogical or learning activity models.

The teacher's role is still crucial, but they become more of a learning facilitator, rather than content provider.

With the increase in access to information and production of knowledge, mobile learning is challenging traditional educational institutions and associated authorities. They can be personalised, being ideally suited to informal and contextual learning. Learning across formal and informal contexts means that there is a blurring of the boundaries between learning and work.



MOBILE LEARNING

Ten ways in which mobile learning will revolutionise education:

- **Continuous learning:** learning is increasingly getting interspersed with our daily lives through the use of mobile devices and near ubiquitous access to the Internet.
- **Educational leapfrogging:** low cost mobile devices are particularly important in developing countries.
- **A new crop of older, lifelong learners:** often referred to as the silver surfers, are increasingly getting into using mobile devices.
- **Breaking gender barriers:** in parts of the world where women are not allowed access to formal education, mobile devices provide them with a means to access high quality resources and to communicate with peers.
- **A new literacy is emerging:** there are now numerous companies that teach people via interactive lessons to write software programmes.
- **Education's long tail:** The vast array of resources to support many different subjects means that mobile devices enable learners to study niche subjects.
- **Teachers and pupils trade roles:** Learning and teaching becomes a two

way process, where teachers can learn from the learners and vice versa.

- **Synergies with mobile banking and mobile health:** A lot can be learnt from the way in which mobile banking and health have developed, such as using text messaging to deliver short lessons, and give teacher feedback and grades.
- **New opportunities for traditional educational institutions:** Mobile learning can potentially complement and extend traditional educational offerings.
- **A revolution leading to customised education:** Mobile learning is not just about digitising existing content, it is about harnessing the power of social media and embracing open practices.

Twelve principles of mobile learning:

- **Access:** in terms of access to content, peers, experts, and resources.
- **Metrics:** increasing there are metrics associated with how we are using mobile devices, which can be used to inform and improve the way we learn.
- **Cloud computing:** means that we can access information anywhere, via any device.

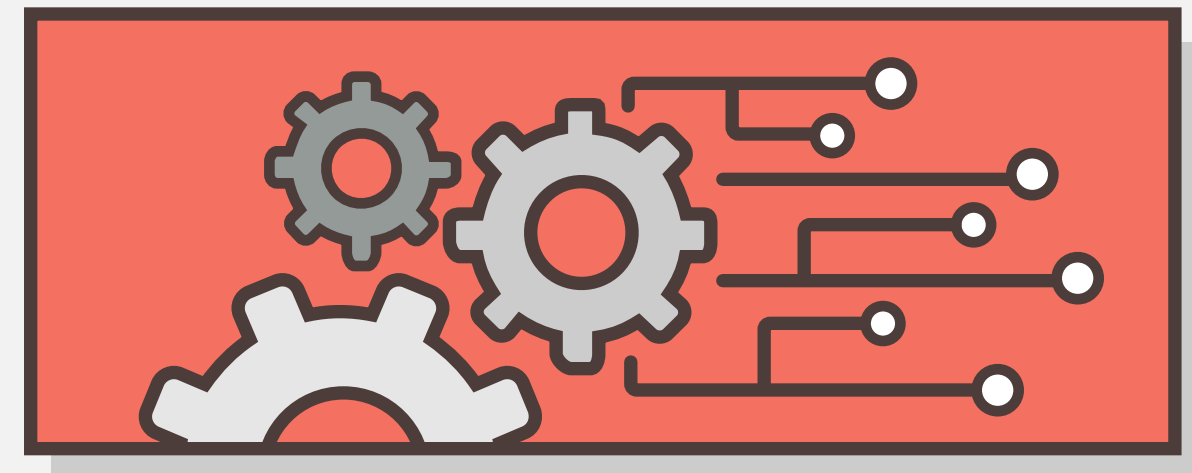
MOBILE LEARNING

- **Transparent:** transparency is a byproduct of connectivity, mobility and collaboration.
- **Play:** is a key characteristic of authentic, progressive learning. In a mobile learning environment, learners encounter a dynamic and often unplanned set of data, domains and collaborations.
- **Asynchronous:** enabling a learning experience that is personalised, just in time and reflective.
- **Self-actuated:** where learners plan how and what they learn, facilitated by teachers, who are the experts in terms of the resources and assessment.
- **Diverse:** learning environments are constantly changing, enabling learners to encounter a stream of new ideas, unexpected challenges, and constant opportunities for revision and application of thinking.
- **Curation:** there are now a wealth of Apps to support curation so that individual learners can group and share useful resources.
- **Blending:** Across the physical and digital space and across different devices, supporting both formal and informal learning.
- **Always-on:** Always-on learning is self-actuated, spontaneous, iterative

and recursive.

- **Authentic:** enabling situative and personalised learning.

So it would appear that mobile learning has finally come of age, it will be interesting to see how the use of mobile devices learning and teaching develops in the coming years.



THE ROLE OF MOBILE LEARNING IN ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNING

The key characteristics of mobile learning include:

- Enables knowledge building by learners in different contexts.
- Enables learners to construct understandings.
- Mobile technology often changes the pattern of learning/work activity.
- The context of mobile learning is about more than time and space.

Adult non-formal learning is important in a number of respects:

- It is an important and valuable part of an individual's learning journey.
- It can help us respond to the challenges of a changing society.
- It can support both individual happiness and motivation and well-being and social cohesion and inclusion.

Promoting adult informal and non-formal learning is important as a means to respond to the many changes and challenges facing society today. These factors will mean that there is an increase in the number of learners in the future and these learners have changing learning priorities. Adult learning can enable people to find meaning and purpose in periods of unemployment

and in post-employment. It can give them transferable skills to help them make career changes. Finally, it can provide a way to share knowledge and experience between generations. Adult informal and non-formal learning enable learners to set their own learning goals, in a way that is personally meaningful within their own lives and contexts.

Digital technology can facilitate adult learning in a number of ways:

- It can provide access to information about a wide range of learning opportunities.
- It can inspire interest in a particular subject.
- It can provide opportunities and resources for adult learner to continue learning after they have finished a particular formal course, leading to lifelong learning.
- It can widen accessibility to learning by offering alternative pedagogical approaches.
- It can open up interaction and collaboration between adult learners in dispersed geographical locations.
- It can transform the way people learn by allowing innovative and collaborative

THE ROLE OF MOBILE LEARNING IN ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNING

learning practices.

- It can provide opportunities for adults to reflect on their learning.
- It can increase the options and resources available to adult education providers.
- It can help to engage the adult learners of the future.
- It can allow adults to engage in learning which suits their learning needs and takes place at their own pace.
- It can offer a convenient, flexible and engaging learning medium.

Technologies can be used to make connections more visible between non-formal learning and the informal self-directed learning that takes place at home or in locations outside adult educational settings. They can also be used to support learners in their learning journey and make them more aware of it. Finally, they can be used as a learning medium and deliver mechanism for adult education provision.

However, it is important to note that the benefits of using technology for learning are not determined by the technology itself, but derive from the manner in which the technology is used, the opportunities the technology

offers for the development of new learning practice, and the context within which learning takes place. One of the challenges with using technology for learning is to consider how they can be used to facilitate a deeper sense of learning, which does not rely simply on the transmission of information. The focus needs to be on using them in new and transformative ways to construct not only digital tools and texts, but also to facilitate the collaborative constitution of meaning and the acquisition of new and changed knowledge and attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The report has provided an up to date state of the art review of the use of mobile devices for adult non-formal learning for language acquisition. Key terms were defined and the broad literature on mobile learning and in particular language acquisition were described. It is clear that adult non-formal learning is increasingly important in today's complex society. New mobile devices, along with near ubiquitous connectivity, means the learning anywhere, anytime is now a reality.





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