Language Learning with Mobile Apps

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Room 550, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
12:45 – 14:00
Chair: Dr Chun Lai

Abstract:
In this auto-ethnographic study, I describe and analyse my learning experiences as a novice learner of Spanish with mobile apps. The aim of this study was to experience language learning with apps from a learner’s perspective and to increase my awareness of learning opportunities in an informal learning context. Over a period of six months, I explored and used a wide range of different language apps and features from my mobile phone to study Spanish. I documented the use of these apps, my observations and reflections on my learning process with the journaling app Day One.

In the academic world of language education, mobile apps are still met with criticism, “good for learning new vocabulary at best” (Flynn, 2017). Language learning apps, however, vary widely in scope and purpose and they can offer an unconventional and often intuitive approach to language learning. Further, the effectiveness of app-based learning should not be measured on the features of an individual app but rather on the ability of the learner to create their personal learning context through the affordances of these language tools.

Based on the analysis of my learning journal, in this presentation I will describe the informal learning opportunities I discovered on my Spanish learning journey. I will focus on a selection of five apps - Memrise, Duolingo, Busuu, HelloTalk and Reverso Context – to illustrate how my awareness of the informal learning context developed through exploration and reflection.

About the speaker:
Antonie Alm (PhD, UCLA) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Languages and Cultures at the University of Otago in New Zealand where she teaches courses in German language and culture, Computer-assisted language learning and Intercultural Communication. Her research on topics of social media in language learning, L2 motivation, learner autonomy and informal learning have appeared amongst others in Innovation in Language Learning & Teaching, JALT CALL Journal, Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht and Multilingual Matters. Dr. Alm is on a number of editorial review committees and works as an Associate Editor for the CALL Journal as well as the JALT CALL Journal. She is also the senior vice-president of the New Zealand German teacher association.

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