

## BOOK REVIEW

# Mobile Learning: Languages, Literacies, and Cultures

*Reviewed By Margarete Grimus, Technical University Graz, Graz, Australia*

---

### ABSTRACT

*'Mobile Learning: Languages, Literacies and Cultures' provides a summary of learning and teaching with mobile devices to depict effective new ways of learning. It offers a comprehensible introduction for anyone interested in the field of education. Mark Pegrum bonds theory and practice together by drawing from the expertise of a diverse range of international experts: Thirteen vignettes and eighteen case-studies from the field of mobile learning are incorporated. The book is a useful and excellent resource for teachers of all grades as well as prospective teachers, policymakers and other mobile learning professionals. Various aspects of mobile learning and teaching by combining language learning and development of different literacy levels are clearly outlined and tied together with the theoretical background.*

*Keywords: Literacies and Cultures, Mobile Language Learning, Mobile Learning, New Language Learning, Preparing for a Mobile Educational Future, 21st Century Skills, Teaching with Mobile Devices*

---

*Mobile Learning: Languages, Literacies and Cultures (New Language Learning and Teaching Environments)*

*Mark Pegrum*

*© July 2014 by Palgrave Macmillan*

*276 pp.*

*\$26.45*

*ISBN-13: 978-1137309808*

and policymakers involved in planning new ways of teaching and learning.

Mark Pegrum bonds theory and practice together by drawing from the expertise of a diverse range of international experts. He incorporates thirteen vignettes and eighteen case-studies from the field of mobile learning.

### STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The author packed an amazing amount of information in his book, divided into seven sections.

Within the *first chapter* the reader is introduced to the broader mobile learning landscape, insights in different concepts as a differentiation as well as an intersection of e-learning are offered. Pegrum stresses three main issues: devices, learners and learning experience. In

### INTRODUCTION

Mark Pegrum has written a summary of learning and teaching with mobile devices to depict effective new ways of learning.

The book is an excellent resource and provides a comprehensible introduction for anyone interested in the field of education. It also is highly recommended for organizations

addition he points out connected problems, namely affordances and affordability.

*Section two* is geared towards three agendas of mobile learning: transforming teaching and learning, developing 21st century skills and promoting social justice (e.g. in culturally or socially marginalised groups or by empowering women and girls' literacy). Pegrum explains how the three agendas in some cases mesh together, in others they may come partially in conflict, depending on widely varying contexts, resulting from cultural and linguistic background, grounded on political, economic and social aspects.

*The third part* focuses on issues dealing with mobile technologies and the mobility-technology divide. Pegrum clearly figures out the difference in the developed and the developing world, related to ecosystems, affordance and availability of single or multifunctional devices with considerably pedagogical potential and connectivity. He also stresses the controversial discussion of BOYD (bring your own device) and BYOT (bring your own technology), by explaining the situation in different regions, e.g. where devices are rolled out by national governments or institutions, and in specific cases are given for loan or as a class set.

*Section four and five* are directed to language learning with technology, in particular with mobile devices. Mark Pegrum discusses the development of technical supported language learning in the past, from a behaviouristic and communicative perspective and develops new approaches by bringing a sociocultural point of view into the foreground. He points to online networks, which involve learners in diverse content creation activities, where user-generated content can be employed in class teaching as well as be easily shared online. The author reflects on the influences of a wide range of materials (e-books, grammar apps, multimodal blogging or complex gaming) and the impact on *how* language can be taught. Finally he explains how digital communication in general influences *what aspects* of language should be taught. This includes making content available on different levels, for example in podcasts,

audiobooks or apps, which influence listening and speaking capacities of learners. He refers to many examples of individual as well as collaborative activities and authentic tasks tailored to specific user groups.

*Section six* covers more advanced topics. Mark Pegrum emphasises how digital tools can not only play an important role in supporting language learning but beyond that have an impact on the development of literacy generally and more specifically on digital literacy. He emphasizes the coherency between language learning and literacy, especially in cultures where the official language is not the same as the native language, or in countries where different ethnic cultures need to learn a common language. Based on a review of traditional approaches to literacy development he draws attention to the necessity to meet the challenges of digital literacies in a meaningful practice, which are integral to social life and engaged citizenship.

*The final chapter* looks to the digital future with a clear focus on digitally trained and networked teachers. Based on the topic presented in the previous chapters and linking the topic with the TPACK framework (technological, pedagogical and content knowledge, p.190) he draws attention to the transformative use of technology, which needs to be addressed in teacher training as a new perspective. He points out that technology can not only enrich pedagogy but beyond that teachers have to be trained on how mobile learning can serve literacy.

## RELEVANCE

The detailed description of the content provided above should convey the breadth and scope of this publication. The book is very comprehensive in the key topics discussed and addresses professionals as well as teachers who are new to the field, by providing practical information about developments and future demands of learning with mobile devices. With the embedded 18 case studies from around the world, he addresses a great variety of topics, with a focus

on language learning and literacy on different levels of education. The case studies differ in number and affiliation of participants (students, teachers, organisations, young learners), some are local, others international, some are commercial, others not-for profit, some from the developed parts of the world and many from developing regions. This offers an extended insight in the various concepts, benefits and challenges of learning in multiple contexts. The final chapter *Preparing for a Mobile Educational Future* should enable readers to explore and embrace new ideas for learning and teaching mediated by mobile devices.

## COMMENTS

The theoretical aspects and the presentation of the case-studies are not only valuable for language teaching and learning, most of the underlying thoughts and practical solutions can easily be migrated to other subjects and topics and are relevant for the development of a wide range of literacies, which are influenced by different cultures associated with ethnics and social status.

I am in favour of the structure of the book, starting with a list of abbreviations, which allows the reader to become familiar with the most common notions in the text. Thereafter Pegrum provides the foundation needed to understand the concepts of mobile learning and the intersection with new powerful devices and technology. Vignettes distributed throughout the book are reflecting insights of highly experienced educators, with intimate knowledge of multiple mobile learning contexts. The first vignette written by Kukulska-Hulme emphasises the contrasting aspects which can be addressed in

discussions on mobile learning. This kind of comments can encourage readers to rethink their personal perception of mobile learning. What I took particularly from the book is the profound knowledge of the author, showcased by providing comprehensive analysis of the various and complex aspects of mobile learning not only on language learning but also on development of literacy and cultures in general.

However I have a minor recommendation: I personally would appreciate to find a short chapter at the beginning of the book with a brief overview of what can be expected in the particular sections.

## SUMMARY

*Mobile Learning: Languages, Literacies and Cultures* is a useful and excellent resource for teachers of all grades as well as prospective teachers, policymakers and other mobile learning professionals. Various aspects of mobile learning and teaching by combining language learning and development of different literacy levels are clearly outlined and tied together with the theoretical background. The book motivates to rethink learning and teaching with mobile devices in multiple contexts by covering almost everything teachers interested in new ways of learning should know. Mark Pegrum succeeds in illustrating the complexity of the topic by structuring the key-issues. The reader will emerge with new insights and appreciation of what mobile devices can offer to learning in general and language learning in particular. Briefly worded it is a high-level orientation tool for those who want to be part of the exciting developments in educational practice and learning.

*Mark Pegrum is a specialist in mobile learning, lecturing at the Faculty of Education of the University of Western Australia. In earlier years he has taught languages, e. g. English to speakers of other languages, German, French and contemporary culture in Universities and organizations in Australia and Europe. His research addresses m-learning and e-learning with a focus on digital literacies. For more information please visit <http://e-language.wikispaces.com/mark-bio>*

*Margarete Grimus, Prof. Emerita of University of Education, Vienna. During her time at the University of Education she was responsible for teacher education in ICT and media-education for primary and secondary school teachers. Her research focuses on integration of learning with digital devices at all levels of education as well as curriculum development in European countries. Current research activities address the topic mobile learning as a chance to enhance education in developing countries, training teachers to implement mobile learning in Sub Sahara Africa. For publications and extended CV please visit <http://www.grimus.or.at/>.*