


Chapter 2

The Rise of Online Learning and Its Impact on Education: Who Is Really Accountable?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the transformative rise of online learning and its significant impact on the global education landscape. It examines the key drivers behind the adoption of digital education platforms, including technological advancements, increased accessibility, and the demand for flexible learning environments. The chapter highlights the benefits of online learning, such as enhanced inclusion, personalized instruction, and support for lifelong learning. It also critically analyzes the associated challenges, including the digital divide, concerns about educational quality, academic integrity, and student well-being. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the future trajectory of education, emphasizing the potential of blended learning models and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual reality to reshape teaching and learning. Through this analysis, the chapter provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to adapt and thrive in an increasingly digital educational ecosystem.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is receiving growing attention among language educators and researchers. Mobile devices and their applications offer flexibility of usage anywhere and anytime, which is highly relevant for busy learners and people with special learning needs. Accordingly, MALL approaches can be used to set language learning experiences according to personal needs and affordances, which is desirable in inclusive language educational contexts. However, different theoretical models are informing different implementations of MALL practice, with some applications going beyond 'pure' MALL to exploit games, the real world, and additional information to enhance motivation and advance language learning for the user (Moghal et al., 2020). This paper provides an exploration of the relevance of MALL for inclusive language education, in light of the dual concepts of mobile application in education and language inclusivity. Despite the rapid strides that online and distance language learning have made over the past two decades, they continue to face issues that are typically identified as challenging in inclusive settings (Musa et al., 2025). Mobile technology seeks to address physical accessibility in learning, while mobile handhelds address specific language education needs of learners with poor devices, usable by those who find a keyboard, mouse, or conventional classroom setting hard to use. This paper considers developments related to learning languages using mobile devices in which this area of research, learning, the learner, and experiences not only affords opportunities for those who fall outside of its traditional scope but are also developed from and through practices of people learning with mobile devices (Saravanan et al., 2023). Also presented is a classification of MALL theoretical frameworks and the state of the art concerning the applications of MALL today that inform this discussion of MALL in relation to inclusive language education.

In the decade of pervasive technology that now characterizes the contemporary classroom environment, it is not only educators' views of intelligence and cognition that have changed dramatically. Official policies and wider societal attitudes have increasingly advocated a more inclusive language education provision that promotes the development of multilingualism and intercultural skills for all. Yet, as has long been recognized in the field, the adoption of inclusive educational policy discourse and practice is more easily promised than delivered in multilingual societies where social discrimination is deeply entrenched (Chua et al., 2021). With inequalities of access to competent language instructors and educational resources continuing to consolidate existing patterns of disadvantage at all ages, the digital domain has been identified as one potential arena in which an alternative, inclusive form of education might be pursued.

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