

Learning German Online – about Prerequisites, Attitudes and the Effect of Computermediated Communication on Language Learning

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Abstract

For over a decade Högskolan Dalarna/Dalarna University has been offering online-education in a wide range of languages. In our field, German as a second/foreign language, we have developed courses both on primary and advanced levels and we are also involved in education of German teachers.

Our research interest is the use and the role and influence of Information and Communication Technologies in German/foreign language classrooms in Swedish secondary school. In Sweden there is a growing number of schools which use Information and Communication Technologies in foreign language education, while little research has been done on the matter how they contribute to language learning. Our contribution to the conference is to present our research project, which will start this fall with classes in the Swedish region Dalarna, and we will also show some preliminary results. The project is based on a longitudinal study, which will run over two years, and has two main directions: 1. The examination of teachers' and learners' usage of the computer as a learning/communication tool and their attitudes towards it. We hope to get a better understanding of the conditions under which computers aid language learning in a blended learning setting. 2. The other part of our research is directed at chat as a communication mode and its effects on language development. We want to know: In which mode, written chats compared to oral face-to-face communication, do certain language structures and discourse features first occur. Which influence can be supposed that both modes have on each other? We expect to find out that chat contributes to the development of oral skills because its conditions for planning in- and output supports the development of routines to process certain structures and discourse features. As our research methods we use questionnaires, interviews, conversation and discourse analysis.