Languaging in virtual learning sites
Studies of online encounters in the language-focused classroom

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract


This thesis focuses upon a series of empirical studies which examine communication and learning in online glocal communities within higher education in Sweden. A recurring theme in the theoretical framework deals with issues of languaging in virtual multimodal environments as well as the making of identity and negotiation of meaning in these settings; analyzing the activity, what people do, in contraposition to the study of how people talk about their activity. The studies arise from netnographic work during two online Italian for Beginners courses offered by a Swedish university. Microanalyses of the interactions occurring through multimodal video-conferencing software are amplified by the study of the courses’ organisation of space and time and have allowed for the identification of communicative strategies and interactional patterns in virtual learning sites when participants communicate in a language variety with which they have a limited experience.

The findings from the four studies included in the thesis indicate that students who are part of institutional virtual higher educational settings make use of several resources in order to perform their identity positions inside the group as a way to enrich and nurture the process of communication and learning in this online glocal community. The sociocultural dialogical analyses also shed light on the ways in which participants gathering in discursive technological spaces benefit from the opportunity to go to class without commuting to the physical building of the institution providing the course. This identity position is, thus, both experienced by participants in interaction, and also afforded by the ‘spaceless’ nature of the online environment.

Keywords: virtual learning sites, synchronous computer mediated communication, languaging, multimodality, sociocultural, dialogical, social interaction, netnography, learning.

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