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Student perceptions of smartphones as language-learning resources in Ireland

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This presentation will describe research exploring the ways in which language learners at an Irish university use and perceive their smartphones as language learning resources. The data revealed that learners held clear and narrow perceptions of what constitutes 'proper' language learning, with smartphones playing only a limited and peripheral role. While smartphones and social media have become normalised in the everyday lives of our learners outside the classroom, learning via these platforms 'has not become normalized or fully integrated into formal language teaching as predicted' (Reinhardt, 2020, p.235). This presentation will detail a research project which investigated how language learners at an Irish university use and perceive their smartphones as language learning resources. Firstly, the methodology, which included a survey, a case study, and a group interview, will be described. Secondly, the presentation will present the findings of the study, which indicated a clear preference for traditional study practices such as 'sitting down' to study lists of verbs, and for typical resources such as books and laptops. It will also be shown that the student cohort in question made a clear distinction between 'actual, proper study', and the traditional resources and practices associated with it, and a more casual form of Edutainment-style activity in which smartphones could play a more meaningful role. The presentation will argue that these study behaviours are influenced by the learners' underlying perceptions of what language learning is, and what laptops and smartphones are 'for', and that these perceptions are instilled at secondary-level schooling, which, in Ireland, remains quite traditional in terms of the resources used and learning behaviours encouraged. The presentation will stress the importance of fostering the kinds of digital literacies our students need to become effective users of smartphones both within and beyond the language classroom (Murray et al., 2020). The presentation will finish by outlining a number of recommendations aimed at integrating smartphones into the language-learning classroom more effectively, and through which learners will develop the attributes need to become more aware and judicious users of smartphones both in general and as part of their language-learning practices."