

SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING WITH MOBILE INSTANT MESSAGING

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of mobile interaction platform to support student learning. Recent new developments in mobile applications (app) avail new opportunities to access information, connect, communicate, collaborate and network for education purposes. This paper reviews some apps for Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), a messaging technology that supports real-time synchronous and asynchronous interactions with text, image, audio, and video on mobile devices. We propose a study testing some hypotheses applying MIM to support student learning.

Literature

Mobile technology holds great promise to be a supplementary communication medium to reduce transactional distance between educators and learners (Fuegen, 2012; Park, 2011). For example, short message service (SMS) on mobile devices is adopted to reduce the perceived physical separation and psychological distance between learners and instructors of distance education (Lim, Fadzil, and Mansor, 2011).

Using chat technology to engage students in online discussion and collaboration leads to deeper processing of class materials. In the context of collaborative learning, Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) shows better teamwork performance than personal computer-based instant messaging and bulletin board system (Kim, Lee and Kim, 2014).

Rambe and Bere (2013) reported a case of adopting MIM (Whats App) for instructors and students to model future workforce practice. Indeed, more than 91% of college aged mobile phone owners send or received text messages monthly, compared to 65% of them send or receive email (GfK MRI Reporter 2013). About 40% of college aged owners participates in video calls or chat from their phones (Duggan 2013). On average, college aged smartphone owners send and receive nearly 4,000 texts per month (Experian, 2013). These usage percentages have been rising over the years, however, literature in marketing education rarely reports the share of student text usage for learning purposes.

New developments in mobile technology further create powerful communication format: messages using apps that add images, videos, and audio clips have become increasingly popular world-wide (Statista 2014). An app is a self-contained program or software designed to perform a particular function on a mobile device. The leading messaging apps grow large user base because they connect people worldwide, offer unique functions and are free. Most apps only need a working smart phone to sign up and the permission to search contact lists to connect to other users of the same app. The digital natives may be better prepared for a future of ad hoc, always-on collaboration in a fast-moving and geographically diverse workforce, an environment that may require a different emotional and intellectual skill set than those that most educators now possess.

The following hypotheses are proposed and tested with responses from students using MIM and/or emails for learning interactions:

H1: Given both options, students use the same amount of email and MIM to initiate interactions with instructors and classmates.

H2: Given both options, students use MIM and email to interact with instructors and classmates for different subject contents.

H3: Students using both options of MIM and email to interact with instructors are more satisfied with the overall learning experience than those using only email.