

The theory of mitigating risk: Information literacy and language-learning in transition

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This thesis presents the theory of mitigating risk, which provides a rich explanation of how an engagement with information supports the transition of students who temporarily move overseas to learn a language. The theory of mitigating risk highlights how the academic, financial and physical stresses that are produced through students' engagement within a new information environment catalyse the enactment of the information literacy practices that subsequently mediate students' transition from acting like a language-learner to becoming a language-learner. Findings from this study draw attention to the dynamic shape of transition while creating a complex picture of the ways in which students engage with information during a time of change and upheaval.

The theory of mitigating risk was produced through an examination of the activities of 26 English-speakers from Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom who were learning one of eight languages in 14 different American, Asian and European countries for a period of between four and 12 months overseas. Taking a practice theoretical perspective, the study employed semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation research methods within a constructivist grounded theory methodological approach. Findings from this research broaden librarians' and language-educators' understanding of the shape that information literacy takes within an intercultural context and have a number of implications for thinking about transition within academic, workplace and everyday settings.

Keywords: Information literacy, transition, practice theory, information practices, language-learning, photo-elicitation, internationalisation