Network learning as an approach in second language learners in Taiwan: a second language reading course as an example.

Weng, Pei-shi

Department of English, Tamkang University, Taiwan

paigerabbit@ gmail.com

Abstract

Learning a second language is a complex process, and, for decades computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and Internet technology have used as a tools to facilitate the communication between different classes of learners in varies places. The questions of what those language learners can learn from network learning become an important issue in this second language reading course. As a result, the purpose of this study is to examine how university language learners interact with each other on the Internet. In addition, language learners' feedback to computer-assisted language learning is also showed in this study. From this study, it explores that computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is beneficial in this reading course and it can be seen as a supporting tool for the future language learning.

Introduction

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) defined as the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning, becomes a special interest in the field of second language learning. (Levy, 1997) It provides an effective learning environment so that language learners can practice in an interactive manner by using multimedia content. Moreover, at the end of the 20th century, the computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the Internet technology helped the use of computers in language learning. Computers are no longer a tool for formation processing and display but also a tool for on-line communication. As a result, language learners, with the help of the Internet, can now simultaneously communicate with others or speakers of the target language all over the world.

However, computers are not very good at teaching themselves. How effective computers are in a language classroom depends how the teacher and students use them (Gündüz, 2005). Thus, the strengths and weakness of E-learning are discussed as follows:

**The strengths of E-learning**

E-learning use in different situations is gradually growing since it provides direct and indirect benefits (Baim, 2004). A crucial direct benefit is that E-learning's comparatively small cost provides a feasible training method so that it can eliminates the need for classroom space and the cost to maintain those classroom spaces and equipments. In addition, E-learning also provides indirect benefits. On the basis of

Hall (2003), e-learning provides language learners with needed training that they can easily fit into their learning schedules.   This so-called "anytime and anywhere" training can be delivered on any on-line platform.   Nevertheless, technology is not always existed without any critics.   Hence, the weaknesses of E-learning are elaborated in the following.

**The weaknesses of E-learning**

  The direct weakness is the reduced personal interaction in an E- learning environment.   First, langue learners can only receive information from one source – the professor or the media content, and usually have limited opportunities to exchange ideas and information with other learners or even learn from their mistakes and experiences.   This kind of learning may bring delays or misunderstandings when information is transmitted.   Second, even nowadays, technology tools and the Internet infrastructure are more and more stable, there are still problems existed in those environment.   For example, the Internet linking problems, hard drives fail, and email may get caught in spam filters and never be delivered.   As a result, in order to reduce those different problems, it is important to backup important class information and make certain that you have alternative ways to communicate when E-learning environment fails.

        Thus, on the basis of above discussion, the following questions guided this research study.

1.   What are the EFL learners' reflections to the network learning on reading course?
2.   Is there any special language features existed in EFL learners' writing?
3.   What are some special interactions in on-line discussions?

Reference

Day, M. & Batson, T. (1995). The Network-Based Writing Classroom: The ENFI Idea,
In Z.L. Berge, and M.P. Collins, *Computer Mediated Communications and the
Online Classroom: Vol. 2, Higher Education.* (pp. 25-46). Cresskill, NJ:
Hampton Press.

Gündüz, N. (2005) Computer Assisted Language Learning. *Journal of Language and
Linguistic Studies, 1(2),* 193-214.

Hauck, M. (2007). Critical Success Factors in a TRIDEM Exchange. *ReCALL, 19(2)*,
202-203.

Kern, R. & Warschauer, M. (2000).   Theory and practice of network-based language
teaching.   In M. Warschauer and R. Kern (Eds.), *Network-based language
teaching: Concepts and practice.* (pp.1-18).New York: Cambridge University
Press.

Levy, M. (1997). *Computer-assisted Language Learning: Context and
Conceptualization.*   New York : Oxford University Press.

Schultz, J. M. (2000). Computer and collaborative writing in the foreign language
curriculum . In M. Warschauer and R. Kern (Eds.), *Network-based language
teaching: Concepts and practice.* (pp.121-149).New York: Cambridge
University Press.

White, C. (2003). *Language Learning in Distance Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press.