English Writing via a Social Networking Platform

Wei-Chieh Wayne Yu, Department of Instructional Systems and Workforce Development, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA

ABSTRACT

This study examined students' perceptions of completing an English writing class via a social networking platform. Participants were 162 aboriginal students between 18 and 23 years of age at a nursing college in southern Taiwan. Different ethnicities were defined and represented by different memberships of indigenous groups or tribes, also known as the aboriginals. The participants were completing a required English language course and were required to pass an English Proficiency test as an exit requirement of the university. Participants' pretest scores indicated that they had a positive perception of taking a web-based class. At the conclusion of the study, based on posttest scores, students' positive perceptions decreased noticeably for six of the thirteen items on the instrument. The findings of the study also indicated that tribal membership had no significant impact on students' perceptions of completing an English writing class via a predominantly web-based environment.

KEYWORDS

Computer Mediated Language Teaching/Learning, Cultural Diversity, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English Writing, Social Media Platform

1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Social media is reshaping today's education system, as it allows an unprecedented access to information and collaboration. Research studies on instructional technologies have been increasingly catalyzed by social and constructivist perspectives on learning. When learners are placed in an environment designed on social constructivist theories in order to facilitate meaningful learning, collaborations and interactions among the learners are supposed to occur (Aydin, 2014; Kivunja, 2015). Hence, Lee and Woods (2010) noted that knowledge is constructed, and experiences and skills shared. The surge of web-based technology mediated learning seems to be able to stimulate the learning process and to produce persuasive learning outcomes. McCarthy (2010) suggested that web 2.0 (and beyond) technologies have not reached their fullest potential in education; however, some have argued that these technologies may not always be successful or adequate tools to facilitate formal learning or learning activities (Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno & Gray, 2010). Numerous research studies examined the potential effects of technology-mediated learning on students, and the ethnic and cultural aspects that may contribute to students' satisfaction with technology-mediated learning, especially among minority students. Hunt and Tickner (2015) and Kivunja (2015) claimed that when the ethnicities and cultures of students, students' learning styles, and their level of confidence are unknown, the quality of instructions, too, is unknown. As Huang (2002) noted, "technology- mediated learning could be in conflict with individual differences" (p. 32). When technologies are used to facilitate teaching/learning, the instructor may experience difficulties related to individual learning preferences and capabilities.

To emphasize the importance of English as a communicative language and lifetime learning tool, many higher education institutions require students to take English courses as an integral part of the general education core curriculum (GECC). Students also have to pass an English language proficiency test to meet an exit requirement maintained by the university. The most common test taken by the students is the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), which assesses learners' listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. Among the four language skills, writing has been regarded by the students as one of the most difficult areas to improve on, trailed by speaking, listening, and reading, respectively. Fast growing Internet technologies have been considered in order to facilitate the needs of language teaching and learning. As stated by Warschauer (1996), direct, instant and inexpensive web applications conveniently motivate students intrinsically, enable the learners to exercise reasonable control over their learning, provide them with authentic materials and allow the users to interact and communicate with real people in a cohesive way.

Social media used as web-based instruction and learning is anywhere and anytime instruction delivered over the Internet or intranet to browser-equipped learners. The instruction can be synchronous, instructor-facilitated, or asynchronous, self-directed, instruction. This type of learning environment is one that facilitates a learner-centered approach and provides the learners opportunities to exchange knowledge and to practice skills.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Computer-based language learning can be traced back to the 1970s, when a number of language teachers used computers as mechanical or language trainers to enhance students' grammar and lexical vocabulary skills (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). For example, after a lesson has been taught in a writing class, language instructors might ask students to review and reinforce the knowledge they have learned in class and practice a certain rule of grammar or sentence structures of the target language alone or with their peers by using computers or other technology devices. Zha, Kelly, Park and Fitzgerald (2006) examined English learners' perceptions as well as communicative competence in a computer-mediated language learning environment. They used both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods to analyze messages posted on electronic discussion boards by the students. The results of this study suggested that electronic discussion boards can be used to promote language learners' writing skill and the target language usage. Warschauer (1996) concluded that "electronic discussion can be a good environment for fostering use of more formal and complex language, both lexically and syntactically" (p. 22). By using language learning software as the "supplementary source," students were able to practice lessons as frequently as needed.

Nisbet and Austin (2013) studied the effectiveness of different instructional approaches on students' English vocabulary learning. The results indicated that students perceived positively and performed significantly higher in a retention test when using a computer-based context instructional approach and concluded that a computer-mediated learning environment would enhance learners' vocabulary learning.

As technology becomes more advanced, many language instructors are now incorporating language lessons with multiple media into their classrooms. Yu, Williams, Lin, & Yu (2007) reported that "the potential of multimedia is to foster the level of interactivity as a form of learning and to offer many possibilities for enriching the knowledge" (p. 219). As Terrill (2000) stated "[English as a second or other language] ESOL teachers and learners across the country are integrating computers, Internet and multiple media with ESOL instruction. The world has changed because of the Internet [and other electronic devices] and ESOL has changed with it" (p. 2). Using computers and multimedia, such as Internet, web page, and streaming audio, with web-based instruction, provides a learning environment that facilitates positive interdependence and collaborative team work for students (Kazantseva, Valiakhmetova, Minisheva, Anokhina & Latypova, 2016). The World Wide Web (WWW) and electronic mail (e-mail) communication media also have a tremendous impact on

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/english-writing-via-a-social-networking-platform/190874

Related Content

Integration of Examination Strategies in E-Learning Platform for Assessment of Collaborative Activities
Amina Aouineand Latifa Mahdaoui (2020). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 30-49).*
www.irma-international.org/article/integration-of-examination-strategies-in-e-learning-platform-for-assessment-of-collaborative-activities/239523

Contribution-Oriented Pedagogy
Betty Collisand Jef Moonen (2005). *Encyclopedia of Distance Learning (pp. 415-422).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/contribution-oriented-pedagogy/12140

A Wireless Rural Education and Learning System Based on Disk Oriented MPEG Streaming Multimedia
Pallapa Venkataram, R. Rajavelsamy, Shashikant Chaudhari, T. R. Ramamohanand H. Ramakrishna (2003). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (pp. 20-38).*
www.irma-international.org/article/wireless-rural-education-learning-system/1618

Quality Assurance of Online Courses
Richard Ryan (2002). *The Design and Management of Effective Distance Learning Programs (pp. 155-169).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/quality-assurance-online-courses/30292

The Girls' Computing Club: Making Positive Changes in Gender Inequity in Computer Science with an Informal, Female Learning Community
Misook Heoand L. Monique Myrick (2009). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 44-56).*
www.irma-international.org/article/girls-computing-club/37519