Chapter VIII

Developing a Web-Based Course for the Conventional English Grammar Classroom: Issues in Planning and Design

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Abstract

Currently, there are three possible teaching scenarios: conventional, lecture-based teaching; Web-managed teaching where lectures have been removed altogether and all learning is online; and supplemental (Web-based) teaching, which combines the previous two. This chapter describes the first phase of a project on the integration of Web-based technologies into the conventional lecture-based scenario of English grammar teaching at a large public university in Spain. It focuses on issues of planning and design of Web-based tools and materials which can potentially support the
Seven Good Teaching Principles. It also describes a tentative plan to introduce the Web-based tools progressively into the lecture-based classroom so that both students and instructors become familiar with the new learning environment as the course proceeds. The author hopes that the work reported here will encourage instructors to keep abreast of innovative methods that extend the students’ learning environment beyond the traditional face-to-face meetings.

Introduction

The use of Web-based technologies is gradually changing the face of education. In many universities and other institutions of higher education all over the world, the educational model is shifting towards the networked learning model, a Web-based approach that encourages a high degree of collaborative learning and knowledge integration and creation. This networked learning model is the result of the new learning paradigm that characterizes the information society, a learner-centered model where students can learn at their own pace using online materials and tools, and in a non-linear manner. This change is evolutionary rather than revolutionary and requires new skills on the part of the teacher to satisfy the growing demands of learners. Figure 1 summarizes the main characteristics of what Reinhardt (1995) calls the old and the new educational model.

While the old educational model was teacher-oriented (the instructor was in charge of conveying stable content, and the student was a passive recipient of that content), in the new educational model—inspired in the proposals of Piaget,

Figure 1. The old and the new educational models (Reinhardt, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD MODEL</th>
<th>NEW MODEL</th>
<th>TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom lectures</td>
<td>Individual exploration</td>
<td>Networked PCs with access to information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive absorption</td>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Requires skill development and simulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual work</td>
<td>Team learning</td>
<td>Benefits from collaborative tools and e-mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omniscient teacher</td>
<td>Teacher as guide</td>
<td>Relies on access to experts over network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stable content</td>
<td>Fast-changing content</td>
<td>Requires networks and publishing tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneity</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Requires a variety of access tools and methods</td>
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