

An Analysis of the Performance of Synchronous Online English Tutoring

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ABSTRACT

One-on-one online tutoring offers equal chances, provides learning resources, and enhances learning performances for students in remote areas. This study examined the effects of learning and teaching during online English tutoring. A total of ten online tutees, ten online tutors and on-site supervisors participated in the study. Research data included video recordings of the teaching, the online tutors' tutoring journals, the supervisors' journals, and the logs of online English tutoring. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were both used to analyze the data. The study found that online tutees were usually in good moods; they were highly focused, and their learning effects were excellent. Online tutors were always fully prepared with their English teaching materials and they interacted well with online tutees. Online tutors and online tutees both went online on schedule. Overall, the effects of learning and teaching during online English tutoring were effective and helpful.

KEYWORDS

One-On-One Online English Tutoring, Online Tutee, Online Tutor, Synchronous Learning

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, 28 universities and 1,344 volunteers participated in the project of "Online English Tutoring" and 1,030 students in primary and high schools were tutored. Online English tutoring for students after school improved the students' abilities in applying information and communication technology and provided online educational services to increase learning resources for underprivileged students (Ministry of Education, 2013). In this study, Wen De Elementary School joined the online English tutoring with active assistance of the Ministry of Education and Shi Lin Elementary School, which is located in a remote area and was short of computer equipment, also joined the Online English Tutoring Project. By means of the after-school online tutoring, the online tutees' geographical limitations could be removed. Also, the equipment of the online English tutoring was well developed. The purposes of the after-school online tutoring were to understand learners' learning needs and establish an interactive learning platform that could transcend the limits of time and space.

Internet technologies have improved significantly (Chen et al., 2005; Wang & Chen, 2009). The number of online courses continues to grow in higher education (Song & McNary, 2011). Allen and Seaman also found that the enrollment for the courses of online tutoring continued to grow rapidly, showing no signs of slowing down (Allen & Seaman, 2010a, 2010b). Through the investigation conducted at the two elementary schools, the research found English to be the area of the highest

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demand to online tutees. Besides, studies that focus on synchronous online language teaching are rare (Chen, Wang, Wu, & Levy, 2008). One-on-one online courses can meet one's learning needs; hence, the main objective of this study was to analyze the performance of synchronous online English tutoring.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Meanings of Online Tutoring

The progress of modern technology has made online tutoring overcome the obstacles caused by long distances. Keegan (1996) defined distance education as the quasi-permanent separation of teachers and learners throughout the length of the learning process. After-school tutoring plays a critical role in education because synchronous instruction emphasizes association, concern, humanistic care, and love. E-tutors could understand the meaning of serving people and they could also acquire teaching skills. Most importantly, the unequal allocation of educational resources between urban and rural areas was ameliorated (Huang & Liu, 2015).

This project allowed junior-high or elementary-school students to be counseled or advised on schoolwork. Furthermore, the project was designed to enhance students' learning motivation, promote local culture, encourage university students to care for society, and put more of the students' energy into service learning (MOE, 2013).

Synchronous Instruction Applied to Online Tutoring

Synchronous distance learning occurs when a teacher and his or her students simultaneously interact with each other at different places; it is similar to traditional face-to-face instruction, for teachers and students can communicate with each other promptly (Liu & Ko, 2007). Synchronous online classrooms created by synchronous distance learning provide a learning environment that can outperform asynchronous online instruction and traditional face-to-face instruction (Chen et al., 2005). Synchronous technologies benefit users in several ways by enhancing their sense of being connected and providing learners with immediate feedback from their teachers (Yuan & Kim, 2014). Online education has emerged as a popular alternative to face-to-face classroom instruction (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012).

Asynchronous Instruction Applied to Online Tutoring

Asynchronous instruction allows interaction between students and teachers to happen at different times (Chen et al., 2005). Song (2018) indicated that asynchronous online discussion is used to encourage the co-construction of knowledge. Furthermore, educators of distance learning have found asynchronous communication to be helpful for encouraging in-depth and thoughtful discussion, communicating with temporally diverse students, keeping ongoing discussions where archiving is required, and allowing all students to respond to a topic (Branon & Essex, 2010).

Digital Material

Wu (2004) defined digital material as making use of computerized multimedia to present curricula. Digital material is saved in electronic media and is employed on a computer or it can be transmitted through the Internet. It can be used repeatedly and be saved permanently. Lin and Lee (2003) pointed out that students with weaker learning motivation usually would not carefully browse web pages. Instead, they tend to skim through web pages most of the time. This way of webpage browsing is harmful to students' learning when conceptual online courses are involved because conceptual online courses require deep thinking. Regarding strengthening students' learning motivation, designers of teaching materials should consider learners' interests in particular attributes of media. Media presentations including images, animations, and music could be applied as measures to strengthen

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