

Chapter 6

The Need to Engage With Smartphones and Social Network Sites (SNSs) at Korean Universities

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ABSTRACT

The disparity between the pervasiveness of Smartphone and SNS use in Korean society, and the near absence of systematic engagement with educational approaches to their use could not be starker. This is even more perplexing in second language learning where contemporary communicative practices are underpinned by the assumption that they will enable students to apply lessons to real life circumstances outside the classroom. As found in an extensive study on teachers' perceptions and uses of technology, teachers often lack motivation to make changes owing to a lack of reliable resources, training, and professional development support. This chapter, therefore, provides the underpinning for a new theoretical approach to promoting a more culturally holistic engagement with technology, Smartphones, and SNS use at Korean universities and education in general.

INTRODUCTION

The inextricable links among language, literacy, and culture are well established in English as a second language (ESL) teaching and learning (Richards & Rogers, 2014). Drawing from this, communicative teaching practices, in particular, assume that through exposure to and practice with using authentic language in practical conditions, students will more likely be able to apply lessons learned to real life circumstances outside of the classroom (Ellis, 2012). This sociolinguistic approach to language teaching and learning finds its roots in many areas but none more so than in the pioneering work of the educational philosopher John Dewey. The collective work of scholars such as Dewey have provided the impetus for developing curriculum, syllabuses and lesson plans to reflect as closely as possible the demands of

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reality for learners in their everyday lives. Further, given the future-orientation of the endeavor that is education, it is crucial that the future needs of students be taken equally into account. When considering the contemporary world, it is evident that computer technology has an impact on everyone's lives – even those who do not personally own a computer, smartphone, or mobile device. Governments, banks, retailers, publishers, farmers, and the food and entertainment industries as a whole are just a few examples of the overwhelming majority of areas in modern life that rely on computers to operate (Zhang & Aikman, 2007). However, the pervasiveness of technology in society has made slow progress into teaching and learning, and an understanding of proper pedagogy is still lacking (Schmid et al, 2014). There is evidence to suggest that this is primarily owing to a deficiency of reliable infrastructure and maintenance (Park & Son, 2009; Tondeur, van Keer, van Braak & Valcke, 2008; Webster & Son, 2012), an absence of teacher training and support (Kim, Kim, Lee, Spector & DeMeester, 2013), and a lack of teacher motivation for professional development (Schoepp, 2005). In Korean universities, teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) have increasingly become aware of the first two hindrances, though perhaps more reluctantly, the third. As Bates (2000) observed, these concerns can only become more pointed as society's use of technology increases: "More and more, learners will have developed extensive experience and skills in using information technologies in their nonacademic lives, and they will be increasingly unforgiving of institutions that seem out of touch with developments in the 'real' world" (p. 211).

Selwyn, in 2003, likewise pointed out, "[t]he ability to use information and communications technology (ICT) is now assumed by most commentators to be a prerequisite to living and working in the 'information society'" (pp. 99-100). And yet, in 2019, researchers continue to grapple with Larry Cuban's (2001) essential question posed nearly two decades ago: "Have teaching and learning changed as a consequence of...investment in computers and other technologies?" (p. 19).

In order to explore this issue, three of the most prevalent barriers to technology integration in Korea are first unpacked below. The importance of literacy and digital literacy are then discussed as the basis for a more holistic approach to the need to engage with technology, and in particular, smartphones at Korean universities and education in general.

BARRIERS TO TECHNOLOGY USE AT KOREAN UNIVERSITIES

The call to expand the view of the barriers to technology use beyond isolated variables to a more holistic consideration began nearly two decades ago (Becker, 2000; van den Berg, 2002). Even then, this may be seen as a natural reaction to the overabundance of specific barriers to integration that had been identified, with some implicitly suggesting that there are few factors in education which do not seem to play at least a minor role in technology integration. For instance, consider what Becker, in 2000, provided as an explanation of the necessary factors for successful integration:

However, under the right conditions – where teachers are personally comfortable and at least moderately skilled in using computers themselves, where the school's daily class schedule permits allocating time for students to use computers as part of class assignments, where enough equipment is available and convenient to permit computer activities to flow seamlessly alongside other learning tasks, and where teachers' personal philosophies support a student-centered, constructivist pedagogy that incorporates

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