Chapter 103
A New Approach for Language Learning and Changing the Teacher's Role in Online Education

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ABSTRACT

Many online educational tools along with computer-assisted language learning (CALL) systems for language learning have sprouted up in the past several decades. Online learning meets the needs of students who have grown up in a world with rapidly changing technology. Online education can provide technology-enhanced and learner-centered instruction to students. Yet, there is a persistent myth that e-learning is not effective, particularly regarding language education. This chapter verifies that this is indeed only a myth. The author suggests that success or failure of online language learning is not necessarily due solely to online education itself. The chapter analyzes learners' motivations and their achievements. The chapter further discusses the teacher's role in online education.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, various formats for learning have become available besides traditional classroom learning. These include e-learning, distance learning, blended learning, digital learning, and virtual learning. Such online learning has attracted a greater number of educators. Teachers implementing online learning agree that online education meets the needs of modern students whose daily life and learning style have been changing rapidly. Online education can provide student-centered and technology-enhanced instruction. Nevertheless, conservative and skeptical ideas still dominate online learning discussions. The traditional type of educator believes that receiving instruction in a classroom setting is the best way to learn a foreign language. This is one of the reasons why fully online language courses (e-learning),

especially beginning level language courses, are not yet prevalent and not widely accepted. The persistent argument is that online language instruction is not as effective as face-to-face instruction. This chapter questions the validity of this myth. It analyzes students' motivations and expectations with respect to online courses and their outcomes. And a new role for the teacher in online education is discussed.

Background

In recent years, backed by global IT progress, the advancement of ICT (Information and Communication Technology), and the penetration rate of computers, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and online education have increasingly been developed and utilized at the institutional level. Allen and Seaman (2003) report that in the US, over 1.6 million students took at least one online course during Fall 2002 and over one-third of these students (578,000) took all of their courses online. Coinciding with this trend, many discussions have been held regarding the benefits, efficacy, pitfalls, and challenges of online learning (cf. Beaudoin, Kurtz, & Eden, 2009; Hills, 2016; Librenjak, Kocijan, & Janjić, 2016). The relationship between learners' motivations and online education has also been discussed (cf. Brett, 1996; Coates, 2006; Steven, 1991).

Regarding the characteristics of successful online learning, Boyd (2004) reviews previous research and points out four sets of factors: (1) technical factors; (2) environmental factors; (3) personal factors; and (4) various learning characteristics. Technical factors concern course accessibility and technical skills required to participate in an online course. Environmental factors pertain to the student's individual learning environment, such as time and space. Personal factors concern student characteristics. Students need to possess autonomy, self-motivation, self-discipline, integrity, as well as an independent learning style. Various learning characteristics are those that successful online students exhibit and possess. Sun (2014), using qualitative and quantitative data, claims that the success of online learning depends on the learner. The participants in Sun's survey commented that self-motivation, self-directed learning, and self-regulation of learning were the key factors in predicting online learning success. Self-regulation of learning includes skills such as setting goals, orienting action accordingly, planning, monitoring, asking for help when needed, trying out different strategies, and reflecting (Guichon, 2009; Hurd, 2006; Wang, 2010). Learner self-efficacy is critical in online learning (Cho & Jonassen, 2009; Cho, Shen, & Laffey, 2010) and can be a key factor in this challenging learning environment (Hodges, 2008). A positive relationship between online technological self-efficacy and online academic achievement was found in McGhee (2010). Womble (2008) suggests a significant correlation between e-learning self-efficacy and e-learner satisfaction. In addition, computer self-efficacy was a significant predictor of online learners' satisfaction and their intention to take future online courses (Lim, 2001).

THE STUDY

Online education has much potential. Yet it is undeniable that online education has some detractors and it is not a completely invincible instructional tool at this time. However, we claim that the success or failure of online language learning is not strictly attributed to online instruction itself. This chapter first examines the reasons why students choose online learning, their expectations regarding online education, and the relationship between their motivations, expectations, and their achievements.

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