AN INITIAL STUDY ON EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS MULTIMEDIA APPLICATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the attitude of EFL learners towards the integration of multimedia into a language learning program. It reports on a questionnaire-based survey administered at the end of the first semester of 2001 to 46 first year junior college students at Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages in Taiwan. All of these students were majoring in Spanish but were also taking English Listening and Writing as one of their required language courses. The survey was related to the English Listening and Writing course. The results of the survey indicate that the majority of EFL learners had a positive attitude towards the use of multimedia resources in their language program, appreciating, in particular, opportunities to practice and extend their language abilities by surfing the Internet, to take laboratory-based listening tests via a test analyzer, and to record and save their own writing and to make use of multi-media resources in developing their reading skills.

Introduction

Multimedia technology has been used worldwide and its application in the field of education has provided teachers a great deal of convenience in terms of teaching, learning, research, and communication. It also offers learners an alternative way of learning like e-mailing, discussing online, self-access learning, presenting assignments or projects with software.

Multimedia application in language learning has positive influence on students' attitude. Researches show that students have positive attitude toward the use of computers for language learning (Fujieda, 1999, Levine, Ferenz, & Reves, 2000). Warschauer (1996) reports that most students become motivated if teachers integrate multimedia in the curriculum, provide opportunities of interactivities, and help them get knowledge and computer skills. The more familiar students were with technology, the more positive attitude they had toward technology (Jones, 1992). Furthermore, self-access learning is one of the appealing characteristics of using computers in the language classrooms. Students develop learner autonomy through web-based learning individually or cooperatively (Brajcich, 2000).

Believing that Information Technology makes a difference in language learning and teaching and that learners' needs and learning styles should be taken into account when designing lessons, the writer has endeavored to reach out for available resources in terms of hardware and software to enrich her teaching, such as using the equipment in the language lab. The convenient devices of the test analyzer accompanying with the audio tape device to check listening comprehension with instant feedback and the online recording tool which enables learners to record, save, and submit their reading saves time and highlights the learning atmosphere. In order to find out the learners' feedback about such integration, the writer designed a questionnaire with statements and open-ended questions for the first-year Spanish major students and conducted the survey at the end of the first semester in 2001.

Presenting lessons with Power Point slides is a new way in the classroom instruction. Practicing listening and reading with technology is full of novelty. Active participation leads to motivation of students. The results of the study showed that most learners had positive feedback toward such computer-based learning procedures as, for example, taking listening tests with the test analyzer in the lab, recording and saving their story reading with the lab facilities, and surfing the Internet to appreciate other people's works online.

Literature Review

Computer Assisted Language Learning has been used in the field of language teaching for decades and has been regarded as a powerful tool for both the teachers and learners. Recently multimedia and Computer-Mediated Communication have been utilized to affect a whole new learning experience. Many teachers and scholars have reported studies of the effectiveness of educational instruction on achievement and students' attitudes regarding learning with technology (Salaberry, 2001; Oladejo, 2001).

Learners' motivation and attitudes are correlated with their language acquisition (Mantle-Bromleyan, Miller, 1991; Mantle-Bromley, 1995). According to Schoepp and Erogul (2001), the use of computer technology helps develop learner autonomy and independence as well as the growth of self-access language learning. Students gain confidence through "learning-by-doing" in an interactive environment. Affective domain does make a difference for language learners. When working online, especially in Internet-based collaborative learning, students develop the sense of community and respect different opinions. Computer-based learning provides an environment that combines the feeling of security, novelty, and exposure to the real world. It also makes students control their own learning pace, increase self-esteem, and improve academic skills. Pow (1999) indicated that learners experienced the value of group work when they were engaged in interactive activites online. Fujieda (1999) stated that learners who were involved in group work had positive feedback to the application of technology. Students perceived the value of word processing, paid more attention to mechanics in writing and favored computer-based writing (Cunningham, 2000).

As for the teacher's role, it has remained almost the same as the facilitator, designer, advisor, cooperator, except that the instructor has to develop computer literacy, manage links of resources, and create interactivities based on his/ her understanding of the characteristics of the modern "magic". Teachers who use computer or Internet as a tool in language teaching also develop their professional growth. The exposure to numerous teaching websites and authentic resources enables teachers to retrieve valuable materials and make necessary adaptations to meet learners' needs. Technology-supported tasks foster the development of cognitive strategies, socioaffective strategies, and metacognitive strategies (Loyo, deMagnago, 2001). In the new trend of technology-based learning, only through the teacher's experimenting with using IT, like the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication, can both learners and teachers realize what they can or cannot do (Chen, 2001, Mantel-Bromley, Miller, 1991). The purpose of this study is mainly to examine