Chapter 7

Pedagogical Rationale for Flipped Learning and Digital Technology in Second Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will explore the background of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) with a focus on how CALL methodologies and digital technology have enabled the implementation of flipped learning methods. The chapter briefly explores the beginning of CALL and its growth through current mobile technology uses. Successive sections explore learner autonomy and digital technology, language learner motivation, sociocultural learning theory, communicative language learning and teaching, language learning strategies, and finally, task-based language learning. Each of these pedagogical foundations of second language acquisition are explored with suggestions for practical application of the methodologies that are directly tied to or supportive of flipped learning and digital technology integration.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile technology is a key element in the future of foreign language education—so say Stockwell (2008) and Park (2011) in confirming a commonly held belief among those who espouse the use of technology in education. Mobile technology in language learning has the potential to positively impact language learners’ autonomy and motivation, as well as have a beneficial influence on foreign language (L2) teaching. Communicative language teaching and task-based learning and teaching methods can make best use of the presence of mobile technology in the learning environment. Stockwell (2007; 2008; 2010) found that students were able to employ mobile technology in their language learning experiences, even if there were some logistical and technological limitations at the time of his research. Therefore, L2 educators...
can use mobile technology to meet students’ needs, encourage their autonomous learning, improve their motivation, and apply sociocultural and communicative learning methodologies in their classrooms.

This chapter explores the ways that mobile technology will have a positive impact on foreign language learning in the future based on existing research and its application to current second language acquisition theory and processes in the context of flipped learning. Flipped learning is the teaching practice in which content instruction and exercises normally conducted within the classroom are performed by the learners as homework, and classroom time is used for content practice and application—traditional homework activities (Alvarez, 2011; Leis, Tohei, & Cooke, 2015; Moravec, Williams, Aguilar-Roca, & O’Dowd, 2010). Such flipped learning methods can spur learner autonomy as students develop the ability to direct their own language learning efforts in the flipping of traditional instructional practices. Flipped learning has grown in practice over the past three years, with particular growth—33% of American middle and high school teachers and significant numbers of foreign language teachers—between 2013 and 2014 (Project Tomorrow & Flipped Learning Network, 2015). Even the teachers who have not adopted flipped learning methodology yet are interested and have expressed plans to begin flipping their instruction in the near future; administrators also desire to have their faculty take steps toward flipping their instruction (Project Tomorrow & Flipped Learning Network, 2015). This chapter explores the pedagogical foundations of flipped learning and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) in support of learner autonomy. The examples used herein pertain to the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Japan, but the concepts supported by these examples will be generalizable across the field of foreign language education.

BACKGROUND

The use of technology in language learning has been explored, researched, and refined for decades. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has become so prevalent that Bax (2012) stated that CALL is now normalized as part of the educational process. Since mobile devices—specifically smartphones—have overtaken the cell phone market (Svensson, 2013), mobile technology has become so ubiquitous that it is a normal part of the vast majority of students’ everyday lives (Murray & Blyth, 2011). Many researchers (Joseph & Uther, 2009; Kukulska-Hulme, 2007; 2009; Tai & Ting, 2011; Thornton & Houser, 2002; Warschauer & Liaw, 2011; White & Mills, 2014) have all explored the future of mobile technology in language learning. In support of the findings of Kukulska-Hulme (2007), Stockwell (2007; 2008), and Stockwell and Liu (2015) explored both the capability of Japanese EFL students to use mobile technology in their studies as well as these students’ preferences for using either mobile phones or desktop computers. In his 2007 study, Stockwell found that students had the capability to use their mobile phones to effectively study vocabulary; however, Stockwell’s 2008 study found that, when given an option of using either a desktop computer or a mobile phone to perform vocabulary enhancement activities, students preferred to use their desktop computers. Stockwell’s findings highlighted some of the problems and reasons students preferred not to engage in learning activities on their mobile phones: small screens, difficulty of typing, cost of Internet service. These findings confirmed those of Kukulska-Hulme (2007), and Thornton and Houser (2002), whose studies revealed the same common detractors to using mobile phones in language learning. Stockwell and Liu’s replication study found that, even with smartphones lessening the previously found problems with mobile phone learning (Kukulska-Hulme,