The Effectiveness of Self-Directed English Learning through SNS: Adopting Facebook based on Gamification

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ABSTRACT

This article suggests an efficient self-directed learning method that will help improve students’ actual English ability by adopting Facebook, which is one of the most represented social networking services (SNS). The purpose of this article is to present a practical way in which to implement SNS-based, self-directed English learning by applying useful concepts from gamification and to ascertain the effectiveness of this method.

KEYWORDS

Facebook, Gamification, Self-Directed Learning, SNS-Based English Learning

INTRODUCTION

As social network services (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter, and smartphones have emerged, they have affected various fields including economics, industry, culture, and even education (Koo, Yoo, & Choi, 2010). In the English educational field, teaching and learning via smart technologies and services have spread widely, covering drawbacks in traditional methods. As a result of these changes, it has become important to consider how to practically and efficiently adopt SNS in the design of English classes.

SNS are the most appropriate representations of Web 2.0 technology and emphasize the value of openness, participation, and sharing. They provide users with the ability to communicate, participate, collaborate, and cooperate anytime and anywhere. In education, by utilizing Facebook to learn, students are able to study without being restricted by time and space and to connect various media such as photos, videos, and texts as well as hypertext.

Since 2000, the Ministry of Education has established “Guidelines for the Operation of Information and Communication Technology Education for Elementary and Secondary Schools” (2005) to establish and propel various policies meant to strengthen information and communication technology (ICT) education. The most important concept of the guide was the recommended use of ICT in all subjects for more than 10% of the course materials. This means that students, who already live in a smart technology environment, will be able to effectively utilize smart technologies in their learning activities and concurrently improve their ability to naturally do so in solving the problems they face in their daily lives.

In this study, Facebook was selected as the main material in an English class of 52 adult learners. To propel their self-directed English education, the learning and teaching procedures were designed by utilizing useful elements of gamification. The class was implemented for six weeks, during which we collected data such as the participants’ opinions, which were gathered through interviews and emails, and reviews in the form of Facebook replies. We also analyzed survey responses.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook in Education

An SNS is a communication channel that emphasizes the values of openness, participation, and sharing. It provides users with the ability to communicate, participate, and collaborate at anytime and anywhere (Park & Park, 2014). Boyd and Ellison (2008) suggested that SNS could be used to (1) allow individuals to build their own personal information publicly or semi-publicly within a particular system, (2) provide a list of other users with whom they are affiliated, and (3) serve as a web-based service that allows you to browse a list of networks that other users have as well as a list of networks that others have in the system (Kang & Chang, 2015).

The most widely used SNS in the world is Facebook, which was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and initiated on February 4, 2004. Anyone aged 13 years or over can easily join by providing their name, e-mail address, date of birth, and gender. Therefore, when using Facebook as a teaching and learning material, there are advantages such as ease of use, ease of securing the participants, and creating less burden on the system’s utilization capability (Kang & Chang, 2015; Hasan, Ozlem, & Mehmet, 2017).

The basic functions of Facebook consist of one’s “Profile,” which shows their personal details and preferences; “Wall,” where users can post diverse digital contents such as text messages, pictures, video clips, etc.; “Status,” which informs the user’s friends of his or her current location and activities; “Message,” where users write and send private messages to each other; “News Feed,” which shows the user’s profile and new posts from his or her friends; “Like” button, which allows the user to indicate preference to someone else’s post; and various content management functions.

Based on the concept of converting offline human networks to online relationships, Facebook has expanded continuously in the forms of information sharing, knowledge creation, and collective intelligence, beyond the mere strengthening of its original concept (Kim & Lee, 2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The functions and features of Facebook have influenced the field of education by increasing the possibility of creating new types of learning and teaching activities.

If learning and teaching has until now been conducted only through restricted methods and limited educational environments, new open structures like Facebook will allow learners with various interests and needs to experience the most suitable learning contents and instructions delivered via the network (Um, 2011).

The changes caused by the appearance of SNS in the learning and teaching environment are emphasizing Social Learning, which utilizes SNS as a learning platform and changes teaching and learning methods and activities (Hasan, Ozlem, & Mehmet, 2017; Um, 2011; Cho, 2011). Social Learning refers to the learning of information sharing and interaction among learners by utilizing various SNS, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on. TED and iTunes U, which present world-famous and excellent university lectures free of charge on the internet, are early models of Social Learning. Social Learning in the face-to-face learning environment is also considered positive because of the possibility of enhancing social interactions and communications in the class (Park & Lim, 2012).

Gamification

Gamification means complementing or reinforcing an existing system by adapting the strong attributes (immersion, fun, and sustainability) of games to other fields (Huh, Kim, & Seo, 2016).

Figure 1 illustrates the concept of gamification. Looking at the picture, one can see that if a user playing a game experiences fun, he or she will be so immersed in the game that the passage of time goes unnoticed. Here, the keywords “fun,” “immersion,” and “sustainability” can be elicited, and the application of these attributes to learning is defined as gamification. Therefore, gamification focuses on devising and planning specific ways to enhance effectiveness and efficiency by adapting the users’ powerful experiences during game play (Won, 2015).
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