Chapter IV

Technology, Lifelong Learning, and Effective Foreign Language Instruction Under the Memory Efficient Approach

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Abstract

This chapter presents a method for foreign language (FL) teachers to implement currently available technologies as instructional tools in a FL language classroom using the memory efficient approach (MEA) to enhance instruction, and help students to become lifelong FL learners. Providing historical backgrounds of the FL acquisition or learning theory as well as technological implementation for FL instruction, the chapter suggests MEA with eclectic methodology for FL instruction. Under the MEA, the methods for “skill-using” and “skill-getting” (Rivers, 1985) are employed; thus, appropriate methods as well as appropriate instructional tools—technological and nontechnological—are selected according to the learning objective or goal. In addition, introducing emerging technologies that may be utilized for instruction in the FL area, the chapter will demonstrate a method to implement technologies in advanced Japanese courses as well as in elementary Japanese courses using MEA.
Introduction

The movie *Matrix* fascinates me as a foreign language (FL) teacher. The movie demonstrates that a FL teacher can virtually use changing situations by opening virtual reality (VR) doors to provide FL practice environments for students. They will be able to practice the language, complete self-assessment tests, take a final exam, and use it as lifelong FL learning tool as a virtual field trip in the target language’s country. Current technologies are not capable of creating *Matrix* level VR stages at this time, but we are in the digital age and VR is right around the corner. We continually improve the power of our first language; however, a FL requires a stronger constant effort to maintain proficiency. The FL attrition rate is many times greater than a first language attrition rate. One mission of a FL teacher is “developing the skills and attitudes of lifelong learners among all ... [their] students” (Dodds, 2001, p. 3). Universities also have a mission that FL teachers support, simply because “university learning can and should be open to people of all ages (post-school)” (Dodds, 2001, p. 1). Current technological developments have brought FL teachers new tools to accomplish these missions. Although their reasons are varied, many teachers do not take advantage of these new technologies in their classrooms.

Every teacher has a learning theory, explicit or implicit, to support a teaching methodology. Technological tools are employed according to the teacher’s methodology. Thus, how to use technological tools effectively depends on the learning theory. Many FL acquisition theories have been proposed and each theory has its own methodology. The theories do not seem to be related because FL acquisition theories have focused on only a few aspects of FL learning, but not on the overall process. After evaluating the overall FL learning process, these methodologies may be unified under a single enhanced approach based on a learning theory.

This chapter will explain a cost, time, and labor effective method to use technologies in the FL classroom instruction under the memory efficient approach (MEA) (Kang, 1993). This approach will help and encourage students to continue learning the FL after graduation through self-motivated lifelong learning. MEA, which is the outcome of human parser FL learning theory, encourages a FL instructor to be eclectic in terms of methodology.

There are four additional sections and a summary. First, I will address the need to implement technologies in FL instruction with a brief historical overview of FL learning, acquisition theories, and recent theories of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Second, I will propose implementation of Kang’s MEA (1993) and discuss how effectively technology can be implemented under the MEA. Third, I will identify some of the emerging technologies relevant to FL teaching and lifelong learning. Finally, I will exhibit technologies I use to teach Elementary Japanese II (JA102) and an advanced 4th year Japanese (JA490). Use of these technologies enhances my classroom instruction and the student’s lifelong learning. The summary will recap the main points and stimulate additional thoughts.