Culture and Language Learning in Computer-Enhanced or Assisted Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This article explores computer-mediated communication (CMC) and information communication technology (ICT) use in language learning. More specifically, the article addresses the impact or implications of CMC tools for computer enhanced language learning. The article attempts to present a review of key literature in adaptation of communication technologies to teaching or learning language in general and specifically second language acquisition. The article stresses the need to understand culture and contextual appropriateness of language, thus, it argues for communication technology to be used as a secondary resource rather than a primary tool for language learners. The discussion addresses the dimensions of cultural variability with respect to language learning. At the same time, features of synchronous and asynchronous CMC were analyzed in the context of language learning. Finally, the article addresses implications for language learning in computer mediated communication or computer assisted environments. [Article copies are available for purchase from InfoSci-on-Demand.com]

Keywords: Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC); Culture; Global Virtual Team; Language; Learning; Online Education; Virtual Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

The increased use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technology has brought a lot of evolutionary shift in learning and academic settings in terms of the type of courses that can be thought. One of the appealing aspects of
communication technologies in learning is the ability to use CMC to offer courses in both asynchronous and synchronous environments. Specifically, CMC is considered an important tool for learning because it facilitates interaction and active learning (Driscoll, 2000; Kanuka & Garrison, 2004; Olaniran, 2004).

In this article the author attempts to present a review of key literature in adaptation of communication technologies to teaching and language learning in general with specific emphasis on second language (L2) acquisition. The article addresses the need to understand culture and contextual appropriateness of language. It also argues for communication technology to be used as a complementary secondary resource rather than a primary tool for language learners. The discussion then focuses on the dimensions of cultural variability with respect to language learning. The features of synchronous and asynchronous CMC were analyzed in the context of language learning. Finally, the article ends with implications for language learning in computer mediated communication or computer assisted environments. Therefore, this article attempts to evaluate available literature in other to identify the benefits and challenges of computer enhanced language learning from a cultural level and then offer some suggestions for implementing effective language learning via communication technologies.

BACKGROUND

Deep learning - which involves the use of class projects with the aid of technology and inquiry to engage students in with practical issues they can relate, in comparison to active learning – that puts responsibility of learning on learners has been offered by the constructivists as a good approach to foster learning environment that allows students to take control of how they learn with a key emphasis on social interaction (Driscoll, 2000; Gunawardena, Low, & Anderson, 1997). However, there is controversy about the degree to which synchronous CMC (e.g., Chat) offers a greater level of interactivity than asynchronous CMC in terms of immediate feedback that can enrich cognitive learning in online courses (Herring & Nix, 1997; Ko, 1996; Wang & Newlin, 2001). The main question to be addressed is whether language, especially new language learning, can be enhanced by CMC when taking culture into account. After all, it is not sufficient to learn just the rudiments of a language, but rather the contextual appropriateness of a language is what determines the competency at which a second language (L2) learner will be judged and evaluated. Furthermore, the contextual appropriateness of 2L points to the importance of culture in language learning.
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