Second Language Distance Learning and Teaching: Theoretical Perspectives and Didactic Ergonomics

Jean-Claude Bertin, Patrick Gravé, and Jean-Paul Narcy Combes
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Although Molina et al. (2007) lament the “lack of a methodological framework” for the modeling and design of computer-mediated tools, the last decade in particular has seen an outpouring of information on theories for learning and instructional design for distance and/or online courses, and advice for the instructor who wants to dip his or her toes into the ocean that I call ICT, or Information and Communication Technology. Molina et al. (2007) present their own methodology, which they call “Collaborative Interactions Application Notations” (or CIAN). Salmon (2003) has the “key” to e-learning. Park and Bracewell (2008) refer to “CHAT.” Beldarrain (2006) refers to “learner-centered constructivist” environments as a perspective in distance learning. Jacques and Salmon (2007) look towards “team-based learning.” We thus find ourselves immersed in buzz words like “meaningful learning,” “paradigm shifts” and of course, particularly for distance learning, “flexibility.” Having looked at distance learning models from as far back as 1972, Moore in 2007, reassured us that “there is room for more than one theory.” As he says, “The whole point and purpose of distance education theory is to summarize the different relationships and strength of relationship among and between ... variables.” In addition to the concept of embracing complex, multiple theories for distance learning, Park and Bracewell also postulate the idea that, as theories are changing, we should adopt a Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, which they call CHAT (2008). They explain...
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