Chapter 9
Applying Acquisition and Learning to Online Teacher Training

ABSTRACT

Chapter 9 extends the information in chapter 8 to consider the effect of combining acquisition and learning and then applying them to a teacher training program. This chapter defines an appropriate balance of acquisition and learning that should be applied to online teacher training in order to give potential instructors the most effective and comprehensive training program to be fully prepared to teach online. Ideally, as this chapter demonstrates, this training should occur before an instructor has the opportunity to teach online, but can be implemented at any time. This chapter provides the set up and organization for chapter 10, when the program suggestions are given in their entirety.

INTRODUCTION

The programme of online teacher training should include training in declarative knowledge (What is this icon?) and procedural knowledge (e.g., How do I send a message?). But, it should focus mainly on more strategic knowledge (What can I do with my moderating skills?). However, trainees should acquire these various kinds of knowledge in an integrated way. The online training programme should not only be about acquiring new skills, but it should also help trainees to explore their attitudes about online learning and its meaning for their own teaching. –G. Salmon (2004)

This text has defined what has been already done to define technological literacy skills in online teacher training, particularly through standards developed in various guidebooks,
as those are the leading publications for self-guided online teacher training. However, this text has demonstrated that none of these resources go far enough to propose a degree program in online pedagogy informed by acquisition and learning, nor were they intended to do so. The purposes of the guidebooks are to provide a manual or resource for online instructors to refer to as they choose to move to online courses or attempt to create online courses without guidance. So although the raw material for generating a program in online pedagogy is out there, it is only through examination, analysis, and synthesis of multiple sources, informed by acquisition and learning, that a successful teacher training program can be constructed. Programs in training online teachers must be envisioned at this juncture in the evolution of technology in education to be stand-alone, and courses in those programs must consciously employ, in some proportion tied directly to the subjects addressed in those courses, acquisition and learning as methods of imparting skills and knowledge.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) argue that:

_It is almost a paradox that what man seems perfectly equipped to do when the need and opportunity arise—acquire the ability to communicate in another language—seems so elusive to language classes and instructors in North American education. We believe that one of the primary reasons is that educators have been misled by innovations and shortcuts._ (p. 16)

“Shortcuts,” as Krashen and Terrell identify, are a main component of challenges to acquiring and learning technological skills. As this text has argued, universities and administrators have generally been looking for shortcuts to streamlining and significantly increasing online course offerings. While increasing the amount of online courses is a worthwhile institutional goal, such an increase should not mean that the quality of online education should drop.

This chapter will utilize the information garnered in Chapter Eight regarding acquisition, learning, and education and apply it to technological literacy. In extending this information, this chapter will explain the way in which online instructors build their technological literacy skills through a combination of acquisition and learning. Once that foundation is established, the specific considerations of what constitutes acquisition of technological literacy in terms of online teacher training can be discussed, as can the specifics of learning online pedagogy. Specifically, this chapter will establish the logical transition to Chapter Ten which describes a degree program for potential distance educators in online pedagogy.

**BACKGROUND**

Teaching online involves the synthesis of a number of teaching, learning, and technological skills. Hampel and Stickler (2005) have identified seven levels of skills in which an online language tutor develops the appropriate confidence and understanding of the online classroom. The levels are: