

Technology Enhanced Language Learning

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Abstract: In this essay, the overall aim is to show the exploration of using digital technology to support language teaching class. Followed by a specific discussion about class design steps targeted at using digital technology to support students' language learning, in consideration of the relation among the language teaching pedagogy as well as technology. The conclusion has drawn that technology can contribute to language learning classroom, not only in remedying the drawbacks of PPP model but also in cultivating low-level learners' motivation.

Keywords: Language learning; Technology; Digital tools

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

COVID-19 has forced the world to switch to a digital pattern though we are not well prepared^[1]. According to their commentary on digital language and learning in the context of COVID-19, technology is inexorably involved in many fields' developments. Take education as an example, the epidemic forced students to stop learning face to face and started learning online. Therefore, technology enhanced language learning is an unstoppable process that teachers should pay attention to.

1.2 The Learners' Characteristics

As mentioned above, in this paper, a specific class design combining language teaching pedagogy and ICT (information, communication and technology) tools will be presented and discussed. Therefore, it's vital to highlight targeted learners' characteristics.

The targeted learners are students whose ages are between 12 years old to 17 years old in junior public school. Although this school period is the secondary stage of their learning in China, their L2 learning period actually is at the beginning language level in the Chinese education system. Some of the students begin to learn English in their primary school (the first stage, the academic results of English are not considered seriously in most of the areas of China, especially in low-developed areas, like Xinjiang.

It becomes a main subject in the junior-school stage. Therefore, students' language ability has been taken into considerations in the class design based on digital technology. In this case, the learners' English ability may be in a low state. According to Helen Beetham and Rhona J Sharpe, attention also should be paid to students' religious beliefs during the design process^[2].

As what has been discussed above, when designing teaching plan, different affecting factors not only physical learning ones but also virtual ones as well as psychological ones should be considered, that is to say, this digital technology design is tailored to meet students' language ability level, their demands and their cultural backgrounds to practice their English.

2. Technology Enhanced Language Teaching

Although PPP Framework Model has some disadvantages, such as restricting students' mind and limiting them to use fixed target vocabularies and sentence patterns, it is still widely used in the language teaching classroom for it is more directly instructional^[3]. For students who are weak in language skills and lack of exposure to the second language environment, it tends to have a positive impact on speaking and writing practice by using this model. Meanwhile, technology can enhance language learning.

Now I will explain the design in details in terms of two aspects. One is the brief introduction of the digital tools, the other is to present how to use them to reach teaching goals under the instructions of the theories underpinning these digital tools.

2.1 Digital Audio and Video Materials

In the lead-in stage and post learning stage, video materials have contributed.

The development of video materials based on the Internet and 5G are now abundant and diverse, providing teachers with almost unlimited materials. Based on teaching objectives at this stage, targeted vocabularies are under the topic of job, therefore a video named What do you want to be in the future? Has been chosen. This video contains teaching vocabularies. Therefore, it can be seen that the choice of video for vocabularies quotation teaching is based on the visible function of video and audio materials, which are visual and textual ((subtitles) sources for students to learn the language^[4]. As for the video used in the post learning part, this video is not provided by me, but recorded by students who are asked to interviewed each other in the online meeting via Tencent Meeting. When students are free to participate in this process, it absolutely helps their motivation. One of the reasons is that formally their privileges and autonomy are enhanced (without teachers in the meeting room). The second reason is that the recorded video also has a function that allows the teacher to monitor the conversation of the students. Even if the teacher does not check the recorded video, it is also an urge for the students to well behave because the teacher may be one audience. The most important function of this video is to allow students to participate in the production process of language, production of text structure as the roles of moderator and

conference announcer^[4].

2.2 Zombie Hunting Game Embedded in Slides

Using games will make children have motivation to continue practicing. And that is why it is shown in the middle of the class. The other reason is that the game is designed as zombies chasing students. If the children cannot say the target words and sentence patterns within the limited time, they will be 'eaten' by zombies. Situational teaching creates a real sense of tension among students, facilitate their practice efficiency in this stage. Besides, they will get the method of how to learn English in an interesting, flexible and cooperation way by competing with each other on answering the questions to escape from zombies. The games or apps which are cooperation or include competitive elements like getting points for individuals or groups, rank, will contribute to the learning process^[5]. To make it more specifically, choose English-learning games to offer help is also effective. Although it is not reflected in this course design, the activity is helpful for long-term teaching. It will contribute to making plans which include part one, for students' daily training and exercise, then, part two, for mixing the game elements in real classrooms.

2.3 Online Writing

Digital technology has reshaped writing, including its form, its genre, and its purpose. According to Binbin Zheng and Mark Warschauer 's work in 2017, there is a disconnect about digital practices in and out of school, both teachers and students are included. Teachers should use three-stage model to facilitate the 'bridging activities'. Warschauer and Grimes' have an agreement on that, CMC could help students express their ideas more freely since they are given more autonomous rights. For example, in traditional classrooms, students are always given too many writing standards and fixed formats and under the control of the teacher. CMC fosters some informal styles that encourage students to express themselves and provide a more comfortable environment. Steve Wheeler, Peter Yeomans, and Dawn Wheeler also suggested that students tend to be more active when they are writing if they are provided with a real role of the author and authentic audience. To make it more specific, online writing makes the writing role more solemn because students' work can be seen by more audiences on the internet, making them feel they are like authors speaking in public or announcers.

3. Conclusion

(1) Students with relatively insufficient language skills as well as knowledge are more likely to be benefit from the design with PPP model. Although PPP model framework has drawbacks, it still helps students engage in language learning smoothly.

(2) The activities designed in considerations of the critical thinking and the guidance of the motivation theory can contribute to language teaching.

(3) Considering features of different digital methods and tools aiming at enhancing language learning, different steps should employ various digital tools. For example, allowing students to participate in the video recording will enhance their sense of belonging and make them feel involved in the production of language. Another example is that CMC (computer-mediated communication) online writing helps students feel the expand of their autonomy.

(4) Games are efficient in supporting language classroom. Competitive elements involve learners more, thus, contribute to learning process. However, the choices of games and the arrangement of game are supposed to be clearly considered.

In other words, it is explicit that appropriate design for learners is beneficial. With careful exploration of learners' characteristics, applying to PPP framework model, combined with technology support, such as digital audio and video materials as well as digital games, seems to be an available choice.

Also, more importantly, with the development of science and technology, digital is applied in many fields, including education. It's always been there. The COVID-19 outbreak did not accelerate this process, but forced the public into the era of technology and increased their awareness of it. As a teacher, it is also necessary to increase digital literacy under this circumstance. Technology enhanced language learning is a tendency linked to pedagogy. Therefore, language teachers should arm themselves, not only in the pedagogy but also digital literacy.

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