Analysis and Discussion of Outcomes and Design in Online Language Classes

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ABSTRACT

This paper points out the problems in online language classes from the perspective of online language classes. According to the theory of distance education, many students in online courses suffer from the decline of technical self-efficacy and the imbalance of self-regulation strategies due to the trading distance in education. This paper discusses the influence of the online environment on the learning status of students. Both technical ability and self-planning ability may become influential factors. Self-motivation in language learning, the use of appropriate language teaching methods and the design of targeted online technologies, these factors work together to obtain a relatively excellent learning outcome and classroom feedback. However, the issues that are currently exposed are not only difficulties for language learners, but also challenges for teachers and institutional executors. This paper hopes to analyze the reasons that affect online language classes, aiming to help the online language class carry out solutions, provide a better language learning environment for distant students, maintain the motivation of self-choice, and improve the course satisfaction, and promote better course outcomes.

Keywords: Online learning, distance education, language education, language acquisition

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current educational environment, among all the emerging learning modes, online learning based on network technology has attracted more and more attention. Garrison suggests that this learning mode can create a community around learners and provide students with a purposeful and meaningful discussion platform [1]. In many countries or regions, the teaching environment has transformed from a traditional face-to-face classroom to a hybrid or online classroom [2]. New mode provides a technology-rich environment composed of multimedia, communities and educational technology.

These changes also appear in language teaching classrooms. The continuous emergence of online language classes is used to solve some specific language needs of students, and it is convenient for students to adjust their learning status. However, despite the widespread popularity of online teaching, the implementation of online courses also faces many current and emerging challenges [3]. Although online learning is more flexible for students and creates more equal opportunities for discussion, it has requirements for students' self-monitoring and self-planning ability [3]. Secondly, self-efficacy also impacts the efficiency of learning [4]. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in self-organization and implementation of expectations. Technical self-efficacy affects task selection, academic motivation, effort, persistence and achievement in online learning [5].

Lim, Morris and Yoon found students who had experience in distance learning showed higher learning motivation and a sense of self-efficacy [6]. The training provided by teachers for students and the experience of using online learning technology in the past has reduced students' anxiety about online learning technology and improved the self-efficacy of online learning technology [7]. The self-efficacy of online learning technology is positively related to the motivation of students using e-learning technology.

Ushida researched the factors influencing learners to choose online courses [8]. Learners will have concerns about the effectiveness of their Internet. The proficiency of students in using daily software does not mean that they can get used to the new learning technology well [9]. Facing an unfamiliar field can cause students anxiety about online classes, and a poor network

environment can also exacerbate students' negative emotions in subsequent learning. Therefore, students with negative self-efficacy towards online courses are often more demotivated, perform worsen these courses [4].

Therefore, this study aims to put forward the shortcomings and difficulties in the current online language teaching, and further explore the parts that need to be improved in online language teaching as well as some feasible solutions, to achieve a better learning experience and teaching effect in the field of language teaching.

2. THEORIES

2.1. Transactional Distance Theory and Online Learning

In the research of distance education, Moore put forward the concept of distance [10]. He pointed out that distance in distance education is not only the geographical separation of teachers and students. It exists in the cognition and understanding in every kind of educational transaction, regardless of whether there is actual distance in teaching. This separation will lead to the psychological and communication gap between teachers and learners, which leads to a variety of negative guidance to the progress of the classroom, such as the increase of loneliness and anxiety of learners in the learning process and the inappropriate use of traditional teaching structures by teachers.

To solve the negative impact of the transaction distance, Moore believes that teachers and classroom design must consider the balance between the three variables of dialogue, classroom structure and learner autonomy [10]. In Saba's research [11], he stated that transaction distance is determined by the relationship between the curriculum structure provided by educators and the dialogue need. The skills and professional knowledge mastered by novice students are constantly being constructed, and the need for dialogue is constantly being followed up; on the contrary, the interaction between students and teachers also depends on the background knowledge and the depth of the course. Therefore, active and efficient teaching interaction and personalized teaching process for education decision-makers can improve distance students' satisfaction with courses and promote the success of online distance education [12].

Learning Theories

Burgess proposed that transaction distances are similar to what Vygotsky proposed as zones of proximal development [13]. It describes the potential level of development of students to solve problems only through

guidance or cooperation with more capable peers. The online environment also encourages connections between learners [14]. The interaction between learners and the guidance of teachers reflects a method of cooperative constructivism [1].

Finally, the ability of learners themselves to control the factors or conditions that affect their learning is called self-regulated Learning [15]. It is the learner's autonomy. This ability helps learners make appropriate choices and continuously monitor their Learning [16].

2.2. Language Acquisition Theory

Ohta believes that social interaction plays a vital role in helping learners pass zones of proximal development and become autonomous and mature in the social norms or skills, including language [17]. Language acquisition theory identifies the elements required for social interaction in language acquisition, including meaning-centred input, meaning-centred output conscious language learning and fluency development [18]. In a language classroom, learners need opportunities to focus on meaning. The specific language learning tasks developed from this are indispensable, such as expressing meaning in writing and verbal; paying attention to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation; in the task, special attention should be paid to practicing the language through familiar content and structure to gain confidence and automaticity [19].

3. ISSUES

In the early stages of online courses, students feel that they cannot get timely and effective help, and cannot gain the same language learning environment as offline courses. This situation will be alleviated in the later learning process, but the student's learning motivation and attitude will affect whether the student will start efficient and high-quality learning. However, in the classroom, the teacher's arrangement of the classroom structure and content design also affects the students' language learning strategies.

3.1. Technical mastery

Digital natives may be able to use integrated computer telemetry in their daily lives, but these skills are not always available in the teaching environment. Due to their lower educational technology and Internet use skills, online educators and curriculum designers will have to have this more reference factor than traditional classroom design to give adult learners enough time to practice online activities to enhance their self-confidence. Curriculum and platform designers can connect to the technical resources of daily life, so that learners can build their own pedagogy and technical

knowledge [20]. Without this holistic approach to teaching and design, learners will likely fail to succeed in an online environment [8].

Online learning environments potentially operate largely on self-driven learning models that rely on the learner's ability to manage academic responsibilities and has less support than face-to-face classrooms. If the learner has not experienced this kind of self-imposed academic discipline before, it will likely experience a decline in motivation and make it quit. The constructivist teaching model allows learners to obtain learning props and help, but they can only solve complex problems independently. If learners are not used to autonomous learning and constructing knowledge according to their own initiative, the consequence will be that the online environment will gradually discourage them [8].

3.2. Self-regulation strategy

Learners have inadequate self-regulation. Compared with the traditional classroom-based learning environment, Tao, Zheng, Lu, Liang and Tsai think that online learning requires learners to participate more actively in online activities and are more responsible for self-management and monitoring their learning process [21]. Therefore, learners need to have strong self-regulation ability.

Self-regulated learning refers to the self-control ability when striving to achieve specific goals in the learning process, including goal setting, self-efficacy, goal orientation, metacognitive monitoring, self-evaluation and other strategies [22].

Autonomous Learning plays a vital role in the classroom practice [23]. In the field of language learning, research has investigated the potential interactions between self-regulated learning and language benefits, such as vocabulary acquisition [24], writing [25], reading comprehension [26], proficiency in hearing [27].

However, the current research reveals four language learning profiles, namely, new horizons, low input, test-oriented and high input. Learners of different English learning concepts have significant differences in network self-regulation strategies such as goal setting, environmental structure, time management and task strategies, seeking help and self-evaluation [21].

Tao, Zheng, Lu, Liang, and Tsai researched students' adoption of different language learning strategies [21]. They found that learners tend to focus more on test scores in the target language with a lower intrinsic interest. In contrast, those with high intrinsic interest learners tend to be less motivated to get higher test scores high input learners in balancing their interests and academic achievement have made great efforts and showed a strong sense of responsibility for English learning. On the contrary, learners with low participation show a passive attitude towards English learning.

3.3. Teaching method

The traditional teaching method is not compatible with the online learning environment. Moore and Kearsley emphasized the organization and design of distance education [28]. They believe that distance education requires special curriculum design techniques, unique teaching techniques, special methods of communication through electronics and other technologies, special curriculum design techniques and other technologies, and exceptional organization and management arrangements to overcome obstacles to distance education and promote personalized teaching [28].

Yet, A large number of online teachers have a low level of understanding of the learning styles of online learners. Teachers who are accustomed to face-to-face teaching participate in online classes or design course structure and content. Such classrooms are likely to be seriously lacking in the teaching aspects of the online environment. So, such a classroom is facing huge challenges. Instructors and classroom designers cannot develop and maintain an interactive and dynamic collaborative atmosphere in online courses. There are also gaps between teachers' technical skills and are bound by inherent prejudices. The lack of specialized training and career development opportunities exacerbates these problems. These classroom defects all make online courses less valuable than face-to-face courses, and it is difficult to obtain excellent results.

4. SOLUTIONS

In response to the above issues, online language classes should conduct a pre-skill level assessment; increase the proportion of interaction and feedback in the classroom structure; set more cooperative tasks to cultivate the language learning environment; provide training for teachers.

4.1. Pre-execution of skills assessment

Learners should prepare themselves for an online language curriculum. Warner, Christie and Choy defined learners' readiness for online learning as students' tendency to online teaching mode and face-to-face teaching, their ability and tendency to use electronic communications, and their ability to conduct autonomous learning [29]. Before the course, it is crucial to assess the learner's e-learning ability [8].

The ability of students in terms of both the time commitment and technical skills required for online learning is currently the most overlooked part of the process prior to starting a class. The reduction in technical self-efficacy can be addressed by organizing targeted courses to introduce students to online courses' rigorous and unique requirements. Teachers should also evaluate their technical communication and facilitation skills and update these skills as necessary to provide real-time, high-quality technical assistance [8].

4.2. Increase of classroom interaction and feedback

Don used curriculum surveys to find that language learners believe that interaction with teachers is more valuable than conversations with peers [30]. Schullo, Hilbelink, Venable, and Barron explained that rich teacher-student dialogue could improve attitudes, encourage early completion of courses, improve test scores, provide in-depth and meaningful learning opportunities, increase memory rates, and build learning communities [31].

Web-based courses should combine different interactive strategies to achieve the flexibility by strengthening the dialogue between students and teachers. The interaction between teachers and students reduces the transaction distance and is essential for successful online learning. Social communication can help the instructor change from the role of a teacher to the role of a counsellor or instructor. Active and pleasant interactions allow students to take more responsibility for their learning. Once online learners realize that teachers are willing to help them acquire knowledge, rather than just passing information and assigning scores, this frees them from the anxiety of the new learning environment [32]. These views also match exactly with Vygotsky. Vygotsky believes that dialogue mainly appears in the learners' practical social and cultural activities [33]. Interactions with more experienced people, including teachers, provide learners with opportunities to solve problems beyond their current capabilities.

Dow [34], in his research, shows that the absence of live elements in interaction is very harmful to the online learning atmosphere. Therefore, the design of online courses should promote more social interaction between peers and teachers and students.

In a study conducted by Dow [34], participants pointed out that in the absence of any cohesive work structure and continuous interaction, the measurement and evaluation of classroom interaction can be very difficult. Muirhead suggested that teachers develop strategies to strengthen the guidance of students, such as creating feedback timetables and formulating specific feedback rules [35]. It may alleviate the difficulties faced by teachers when trying to build meaningful online courses. It also helps teachers' discoveries and experiments to develop strategies for seamless collaboration between students.

4.3. Increase tasks and collaboration tasks in online classrooms

Vygotsky studied the impact of interaction on children's learning [36]. He showed that solving problems under the guidance of adults or working with more capable peers is more beneficial to learning than solving problems alone. Although this research is aimed at children's learning and development, many follow-up studies indicate that these ideas can also be applied to second language development and adult learners [37].

Chen and Jang discussed that the self-determination theory of online learners stipulates three kinds of needs, namely, the sense of control, the sense of being competent for the task, and the sense of being involved or attached to others [38]. The lack of these three requirements can have very negative results. Chen and Jang based the online learner motivation model of Deci and Ryan autonomy theory [39], which proved the direct correlation between teacher's situational support, student needs satisfaction, motivation and performance. They concluded that if these needs are met, teachers need to first understand the students' knowledge background and design classroom strategies supported by their background accordingly [38].

4.4. Strengthen teacher technical training and classroom design

Marek discussed the need to pay more attention to the retraining of professors who have taken a massive step in moving from a face-to-face to an online environment [40]. It is not enough to have good teaching ability as part of an institution's mission unless supplemented by teacher support infrastructure. Only in this way can an institution provide practical online courses. Kate also emphasized that whenever an institution discusses the excellence and quality of education, it must discuss teacher training.

Levine and Sun found through research that teachers often did not receive formal training [41]. They discussed how teacher training and curriculum design are related to each other and their importance to students, and finally emphasized the positive correlation between effective curriculum design and teacher training. They believe that teacher training is an essential factor in creating a good learning environment in online courses.

Ray concluded that training teachers, in a quantitative study, before they start teaching online

courses could better prepare for the courses [42]. Ray also mentioned a study of pharmacy teachers, which showed that only a few hours of training could significantly improve online teaching ability. Ray concluded that regardless of the content and method of training, it will have a positive impact on teachers' online teaching capabilities [42].

5. CONCLUSION

In order to solve the problems as mentioned above, teachers can formulate specific projects and task orientations to improve students' sense of classroom participation by completing tasks, task forms in language classrooms; establishment or guarantee real-time communication. Teachers actively participate in designing better interactive classroom structures.

Institutions should increase training support for teachers to obtain adequate technical guidance for the transition from face-to-face classrooms to online classrooms. Therefore, teachers can make more flexible classroom settings and task arrangements to deal with online classrooms. Teachers implement classroom design that considers the needs of online students and can give students enough help both technically and academically. Students can also feel that they have received enough support in such a class, which can also get a better class experience. The improvement of student satisfaction is accompanied by the improvement of self-efficacy, which can ultimately promote students to make better self-learning adjustments and obtain better performance and grades in online classrooms.

In targeted language classes, such as speaking classes or writing classes, students' autonomous choice of class will support students to make suitable arrangements for their initial learning strategies. Nevertheless, this requires long-term good self-regulation strategies to persist in the subsequent learning process. For compulsory language courses in schools, students may not realize the necessity of the classroom, and the initial self-regulation strategy is not active. Besides, students will find it challenging to adhere to technical problems. For example, the access to pre-class resources is not in place, and the communication with teachers is not smooth, and the time is limited.

According to the above solutions in the article, it is recommended to implement specific exercises plus directional tasks and phased tests of individual skills to deal with the problems exposed in online language classes. The purpose of these tasks is to promptly allow students to promptly accept the mastery of classroom knowledge, help them analyze the improvement and shortcomings of this skill, improve self-efficacy, facilitate self-learning adjustment strategies, adjust their learning direction and focus, and other learning

strategies. Teachers and institutions can also provide more personalized help based on student feedback.

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