

A mixed-method study of EFL teachers' Internet use in language instruction

Yu-Li Chen*

Department of Applied Foreign Languages, Lunghwa University of Science and Technology, No. 300, Sec. 1, Wan-Shou Road, Gui-Shan Hsiang, Taoyuan County 33306, Taiwan

Received 22 November 2006; received in revised form 11 June 2007; accepted 16 July 2007

Abstract

Information and communication technology has affected language instruction in Taiwanese higher education. Varieties of assorted Internet tools are incorporated in educational settings to engage students in learning. To facilitate the improvement of teacher preparation for Internet use, it is important to study the factors influencing teachers in integrating the Internet into their instruction. A concurrent mixed-method approach is employed in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative results show that teacher training is crucial for Internet-integration instruction by the teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Northern Taiwanese higher education institutions. Continuous professional development focused on technology application in language instruction is imperative.

© 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Information and communication technology; Language instruction; Internet use; Teacher training; English as a foreign language; Continuous professional development; Taiwan

1. Introduction

The development and ubiquity of the Internet has affected language instruction. The abundance of resources on the World Wide Web has brought convenience for language teaching and learning. Recent literature reveals that increasing numbers of language teachers are involved in Internet-integration instruction (Fischer, 1999). In facing this digital era and contemporary students who have grown up on computers and are quite comfortable in using the Internet, most teachers are increasingly aware of the trend to incorporate and integrate computer

technology into their instruction. Accordingly, educators are concerned about effective integration to engage students in meaningful learning (Koehler, Mishra, Hershey, & Peruski, 2004).

Technological advancement and globalization have affected language instruction in Taiwanese higher education institutions. The Multimedia English Learning and Instruction Association (ROCMELIA) was established and the first national conference on multimedia language education was held in 1996. Since then, a growing number of college faculties have attempted to enhance language education through the innovative application of computer technology (Liu, 2005).

As teachers are the key persons who will promote any innovation in education, it is important to help them integrate technology effectively into their

*Tel.: +886 2 8209 3211x6802; fax: +886 2 8209 3211x6806.

E-mail address: ylchen@mail.lhu.edu.tw

instruction (Pettenai, Giuli, & Khaled, 2001). To facilitate the improvement of instructional efficacy of Taiwanese EFL teachers in the use of the Internet, it is important to discover the factors influencing these teachers in integrating the Internet into their instruction. Few studies have examined the factors influencing EFL teachers' use of the Internet (e.g., Egbert, Paulus, & Nakamichi, 2002; Moore, Morales, & Carel, 1998) and none have specifically addressed Northern Taiwanese EFL teachers. While this study is specific to Northern Taiwan institutions of higher education, the findings may assist policy makers, professional development course designers, and language teachers around the globe interested in using the Internet for educational purposes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Internet use in language instruction

The use of modern technology in teaching languages has been dramatically increasing worldwide over the past decade (e.g., Chen, Belkada, & Okamoto, 2004; Eskenazi, 1999; Nelson & Oliver, 1999; O'Dowd, 2003; Pennington, 1999; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Warner, 2004). With the creation of the World Wide Web, it has become possible and feasible for language teachers to make effective use of instructional materials, especially in teaching language and culture (e.g., Belz, 2003; Johnson & Brine, 1999; Kramsch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Thorne, 2003). Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) programs provide multimedia with video, sound, graphics, and text, which allow learners to be exposed to the target language and the culture. Learners explore the simulated environment with meaningful multimodal forms such as audio and visual input, which facilitates comprehension in listening and reading (Chun & Plass, 1997). One benefit of using Internet resources is that teachers can easily retrieve the most recent and pertinent information for their students (Moore et al., 1998). The development of hypertext and hypermedia within the context of the World Wide Web offers a vast array of resources for both teachers and students to search and access authentic materials. However, most studies have examined how teachers make use of modern technology in teaching language; few have examined why teachers incorporate the Internet into language teaching and learning.

2.2. Barriers to implementation of information and technology communication (ICT)

Many factors influence the successful implementation of technology. In reviewing the literature, the issues and barriers that teachers encounter while using technology are generally categorized into first- and second-order barriers identified by Cuban (1993). First-order barriers are external and institution related, whereas second-order barriers are internal and teacher related (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, www.becta.org.uk, 2004). Research evidence of these barriers is synthesized and analyzed in several studies (Becta, 2004; Sugar, 2002). Institution-related barriers entail availability (Pelgrum, 2001), accessibility (Fabry & Higgs, 1997), technical and administrative support (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991), complexity and unreliability (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) and funding (Fabry & Higgs, 1997). Teacher-related issues include time (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001), confidence (Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross, & Woods, 1999), knowledge and skills (Pelgrum, 2001), training (Fabry & Higgs, 1997), previous negative experience (Fabry & Higgs, 1997), fear and anxiety (Russell & Bradley, 1997), classroom style (Ertmer et al., 1999), motivation (Ertmer, 1999), belief (Mumtaz, 2000), and attitudes (Migliorino & Maiden, 2004). These barriers to technology use are interrelated to affect teachers' integration of technology into teaching and learning (Ertmer, 1999).

Teachers may not encounter all of these barriers, but any single barrier may prevent teachers from meaningful implementation (Ertmer, 1999). Sugar (2002) argued that, even if the first-order barriers are removed, there existed teacher reluctance to use technologies. Most teachers are constrained by time and heavy workloads, and technology integration requires time and effort in order to be effectively embedded into curriculum and teaching practices (Aust, Newberry, O'Brian, & Thomas, 2005; Koehler et al., 2004). There is often a conflict between the investment of time and the value of making such instructional changes; therefore, to keep up with the ever-changing and evolving technologies and constantly expanding Internet resources, teachers will require assistance. For example, Browne, Maeers, and Cooper (2000) provide a Community of Learners Model in which they designed 12 workshop topics and hired six technologically advanced students to teach faculty

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/374790>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/374790>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)