

Development of Mobile Dialogue Journal Programs to Improve the Self-Directed Learning Ability for EFL Learners

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Abstract: This study suggests a Mobile Dialogue Journal Writing (MDJW) program for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to enhance their self-directed ability in learning and using English. Specifically, the steps are as follows. First, this study examines the effect of the dialogue journal writing (DJW) activity on cultivating learners' self-directed learning (SDL) ability with *SMMIS* model. Secondly, this paper presents a mobile learning model that combines mobile SNS Google Plus and DJW activity in EFL classroom context.

Keywords: Dialogue journal, Mobile SNS, Mobile dialogue journal, Self-directed learning, Smart learning, SMMIS

INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization, the usage of English as the official language is gradually increasing, and the emergence of the concept of World English has made it important to have the ability to speak the language appropriately within the context of the culture and situation. Therefore, it is necessary for EFL learners like Koreans to reduce their reliance on teachers and to develop, instead, self-directed thinking skills to enable their flexible use of English. Among English teaching methods, DJW, which is used for improving writing skill, is a form of journal writing in which learners exchange their thoughts freely about their learnings with the language instructor. The learners can check and improve their English ability by receiving feedbacks from the instructor. The educational effect of this activity can be judged on the basis of the self-directed learning SMMIS model (Choi, Seong woo, et al, 2012). However, due to the large class size of a typical English classroom, it is difficult for teachers to provide feedbacks to all students involved in this activity. To overcome such limitation, this study proposes a mobile program of DJW activity which would be more effective for Digital Native generation, allowing feedbacks not only between a teacher and a student but also among the students.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

SMMIS Model

The SMMIS model (Self-motivation, Motivation, Meta-cognition, Interaction, Self-reflection) is a learning model developed by professors and

researchers at the Korea Lifelong Education & HRD Institute in Soongsil University. This model provides practical strategies in three areas of self-regulated learning: motivation, cognition, and behavior. Theories and strategies that can enhance self-regulated learning are extracted from the various teaching and learning theories in the field of education. It includes all the concrete tools and materials that have been developed and utilized at various learning institutions for the past 12 years. In other words, SMMIS model is constantly evolving, reflecting its application in the field.

Dialogue Journal Writing Activity

DJW offers a channel for a learning dialogue between a teacher and students in which the students freely describe the process, contents, and outcomes of their learning after finishing each lesson. According to Campbell, DJW is defined as the reflective notebook that allows students to maintain regular writing practice, with steady feedbacks from the teacher (as cited in Kim, Soyeon, 2006). Harmer (2005) asserts that DJW has the value of promoting reflection on the part of the learners by enabling such interaction between the learner and the instructor. In addition, Boud (2001) explains that DJW encourages learners to stimulate the personal development of cognitive and metacognitive skills. Moreover, because writing a dialogue journal focuses on the communication rather than the stringent adherence to grammaticality of the output, Staton points out that learners are less susceptible to the burden of making grammatical mistakes. (as cited in Lee, Eun Jeong, 2016) In addition, it is possible for the students to form a close rapport with their teacher through the activity,

which can further motivate them to continue to write journals and learn English. These educational effects of DJW can be described as self-motivation, motivation, meta-cognitive practice, interaction and self-reflection, which constitute the 5 components of self-directed learning SMMIS model.

Table 1. Comparison of Educational Effects of DJW and Components of SDL SMMISS Model

| The Educational Effects of DJW | Components of SDL SMMIS Model |
|---|--|
| Harmer (2005): reflection, interaction with teacher | - Self-reflection - Interaction |
| Boud (2001): development of cognitive and metacognitive skills | - Meta-cognition practice |
| Staton: formation of rapport, motivation (as cited in Lee, Eun jeong ,2016) | - Self-motivation - Motivation - Interaction |

Mobile Learning in English Education

As the use of SNS among the learners has increased, the cases of related research have gradually been increasing in the field of education. The concept of mobile learning was introduced into foreign language education by Chinnery. Traxler (2007) refers to its characteristics as personal, spontaneous, informal, and opportunistic. In addition, SNS learning through a mobile device—a pocket-sized, portable, and private medium—facilitates the learner’s interaction with the teachers and fellow students. Furthermore, the active sharing of information helps the students to build intimate relationships within the learning environment, which further enhances the independence and self-directedness of the learning by motivating the learners to participate more voluntarily.

DESIGN OF THE SMART LEARNING MODEL OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING ACTIVITY

In EFL environment, affective or cognitive feedbacks given by teachers are essential for developing interlanguage. However, it is not always feasible for the teachers to read all of their students’ dialogue journals during the regular class time due to the large size of the classroom. Therefore, this paper suggests the blended learning model of DJW activity and mobile learning. This model is derived from the ADDIE model comprising the following five steps: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Among various SNS, Google Plus was chosen because of its closed nature, which stands out from the others. The afforded privacy can lower a learner’s anxiety. In addition, Google Plus has an

automatic save feature. The application can work as an online archive of what the student wrote and shared, which can be consequently utilized to activate meta-cognitive practice and self-reflection.

Table 2. Development Plan for MDJW Program Based on ADDIE Model

| Division | | Main Contents |
|----------------|---|---|
| Analysis | Need Analysis(A1) | -Identify teachers' and learners' needs for English learning |
| | Characteristic of the Students (A2) | -Analysis of English proficiency level of learners for dividing groups (Conducting Diagnostic tests) |
| | Characteristic of Class Environment (A3) | - Identify smartphone availability to determine if MDJW programs are feasible |
| | Characteristic of the Task (A4) | -Comprehension check for MDJW program |
| Design | Design of the Evaluation Tool (D1) | -Examine the effects of MDJW program on self-directed ability -Design questionnaire item to investigate the effectiveness of MDJW program. |
| | Selection of the Medium (D2) | -Selection of teaching medium for MDJW program: Google Plus |
| Development | Development of the Program (Dt1) | -Development of program schedule |
| | Development of Teaching & Learning Material (Dt2) | -Development of MDJW activity guideline -Development of PPT for tutorial on using Google Plus |
| Implementation | Actual Class Operation (I) | -Practice MDJW in class |
| Evaluation | Evaluation and Reflection of Class Operation (E1) | -Evaluation of the suitability of -Satisfaction and Interest Rate Assessment -Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program |
| | Identify Problems and What to Fix (E2) | -Analyzing survey results to identify problems |

The smart learning that fails to be incorporated into the class curriculum scarcely received positive response from the teachers, and the learners also expressed their dissatisfaction with such program (Jo, Eun soon, 2015). Bray and Harsch (1996) points out that it is important to provide detailed and clear guidance to teachers overseeing DJW activity. Thus, in this paper, we present the modified guideline of the

offline DJW activity and the subsequent guideline for MDJW program.

Table 3. Mobile Dialogue Journals Writing Activity Program Plan for Each Hour (10 Class Times in Total)

| Division | Class Contents | Learning Contents |
|----------|--------------------|---|
| 1st | Orientation | Provide guidance on how to understand and provide feedbacks on DJW activity |
| 2nd | | Give direction about how to write a MDJW using Google Plus |
| 3rd | Application1 | MDJW practice |
| 4th | | |
| 5th | | |
| 6th | Intermediate Check | Exchange of feedbacks on MDJW |
| 7th | Application2 | MDJW practice |
| 8th | | |
| 9th | | |
| 10th | Evaluation | Conduct surveys and exchange opinions on MDJW |

Table 4. Instructional Guideline for MDJW Activities

| Steps | Instructional Guideline |
|-------|--|
| 1 | In every class, learners access Google Plus 10 minutes before the end of the class, and upload the dialogue journal to the circle (group) they are in. |
| 2 | Peer feedback is given as homework. Each learner reads other students' journal entries and provides the feedbacks by the specified time. |
| 3 | The instructor provides feedbacks to the group that has completed peer review before the start of the next class. |
| 4 | Learners can read their peer and teacher feedbacks and ask questions at any time, both online and offline. |

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

Education in the 21st century should not be a one-way transmission of information but rather a coaching process that helps students to become active and self-directed agents of their learning. This study examined the suitability of the DJW activities to improve the self-directedness of the activities in which the instructor acts as a facilitator or counselor rather than as a controller. This study also provided an outline of a program that combines with the mobile SNS, allowing the teacher to surpass the limitation of the large class size and provide feedbacks to each student.

If the MDJW program were to be applied successfully, the following effects are expected. First, through the process of writing one's own journal and giving feedbacks to those of one's colleagues, the learner can naturally receive input and produce output, thereby improving self-reflection and meta-cognitive ability. Second, collaborative learning through group feedbacks entrusts more responsibility to learners within their learning process. Thus, the learners are driven to participate in class more actively. Third, the personalization of the learning, and the possible interpersonal communication it can engender, provides the ground for intrinsic motivation within the learners, which leads to better participation. In conclusion, the educational effect for which the MDJW program aims is to increase learner independence and self-directedness in his or her quest to master communication skills in English. For that purpose, this study proposed the development of a MDJW program, delineating the each step involved in the activity. More future research on the subject is needed to better comprehend the effectiveness of the program. Developing the program and applying it in the context of real classroom setting would provide valuable resources in reaching that end for the future teachers and learners of the language .

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