



Sustaining Motivation Levels in Collaborative Writing Projects

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Abstract- For many decades, it has been an effort to turn the conventional teaching approaches and methodologies into more innovative and practical ones. In the 21st century, technology has been integrated with teaching and learning practices. The advent of Web 2.0 technologies has revolutionized the concept of pedagogics and resulted in the improvement of teaching techniques. Many pieces of research have been done to induce a new insight into technology-assisted learning among teachers and how different forms of technology can enhance the learning outcomes within the vicinity of classrooms. The concept of learning is integrated with technological advances in the core attention of this digital era. Among various Web 2.0 technologies, wikis are considered the most underrated ones in motivating the students in different aspects of learning a foreign language.

Keywords: Web 2.0 technologies, conventional teaching, foreign language

I. INTRODUCTION:

With regards to the acquisition of a foreign language, wikis have become a more popular tool of learning. Wikis are collaborative tools that can be defined as “a collection of interconnected webpages in a hypertext system where the information can be easily stored and edited by any user” (Leuf & Cunningham, 200; Li, 2012). Wikis are dynamic platforms that provide a user with a dual role i.e. the reader can be the author as well as the editor simultaneously (Parker & Chao, 2007). Instead of simply learning the information, they help the students to create the knowledge (Farabaugh, 2007). The features of wikis that make them an exceptional tool for education purposes are flexibility (Nicol, Littlejohn, & Grierson, 2005), friendliness (Zorko, 2009), and their low-cost availability to every user (Zorko, 2009). Wikis can be widely useful for learning as well as increasing the motivation of students in different learning aspects like reading, writing, autonomy, Self-determination theory (SDT), etc.

Learning a foreign language is challenging for most students because of several skills to become proficient in a foreign language. In fact, it can even take years for a student to communicate effectively in a foreign language because language learning demands the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills of a learner (Lee & Chong, 2007). For instance, the learners must get advanced grammar skills and, most importantly, practice what they have learned. With all these challenges, the learners need to have a strong motivation to get through these difficult times. As a foreign language teacher at a college of applied sciences, I have realized these troubles of students in a real-time scenario and therefore I chose to research the ways that can help rectify the problems of learners.

In the pursuit to overcome or minimize these challenges, being a foreign language instructor I have found that several studies focus on the use of wikis, integrated with traditional teaching techniques, in terms of enhancing the motivation levels of students for learning a foreign language. It has been observed that the decrease in interest of students in learning a foreign language over the course of time is interlinked with the low levels of intrinsic motivation (Busse & Walter, 2013). In this scenario, I explored the different aspects of using wikis to get the students motivated and help them overcome the difficulties they face while learning a foreign language. This study will also correlate the findings with my personal and professional context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Technology provides the learners with effective methods and tools that can enhance their learning abilities. Several researchers have discussed the benefits and challenges of learning techniques that are coupled with advanced technological tools. Wikis play a role in collaborative learning which involves an active process of knowledge creation and cooperation among the students as well as teachers and also results in the development of communication and problem-solving skills (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). They can equip the students with extraordinary learning abilities as well as autonomously working in a group activity (Donato,

2004). This collaborative learning mainly corresponds to constructivism by which learners interpret and construct the new knowledge based on their previous knowledge (Kuiper & Volman, 2008; Parker & Chao, 2007). Wikis also promote autonomous learning which was formerly thought to be isolating but now the students are being encouraged to adopt this practice for group activities (Benson, 2001).

Wikis are being incorporated into the foreign language learning courses to increase the motivation levels of students for seeking the knowledge (Yulin, 2013). Researchers emphasize a learning environment that boosts the motivation of students. Motivation can be defined as an internal guide that activates and maintains the behavior of individuals over the course of time (Carreira, 2011). Wikis provide a source of interaction that can be counted as a reason for motivation for students (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Language learning is influenced by a set of factors such as orientation, attitude, motivation (Gardner, 1985). Many researchers stress over the recognition of techniques that can construct and maintain motivation among students during the learning process (Hussin, Maarof & D’Cruz, 2001). On contrary to other theories, Self-determination theory (SDT) corresponds to the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the process of learning. This theory is based on an assumption that interlinks the learners’ needs like autonomy and competence. Research explores that intrinsically motivated students can use the language more effectively and independently. They also exhibit higher language proficiency levels (Wang, 2008; Midraj, et al., 2008).

SDT is a powerful theory that represents two main types of motivation: controlled motivation and autonomous motivation. The outcomes of the later one are positive. Intrinsic motivation is basically a refined and positive form of autonomous motivation that is particularly associated with the interests of an individual (Wang, 2008). For all these positive outcomes to be achieved, technology must be integrated with conventional teaching practices. The acquisition of a foreign language merely to pass the examination is just a failure. With the help of wikis, self-regulated learners can be produced who are self-confident, persistent, and autonomous in the learning process (Mezei, 2008). According to Zhao (2005), there are four main factors that contribute to influential learning: high-quality language input, the existence of enough opportunities for language practice, constructive feedback to the learner, and provision of individualized language content to a learner. Instructors can use wikis to meet these four conditions and produce intrinsic motivation in students for effective technological use in foreign language learning.

Raised Awareness and Repositioning:

The literature review highlights the applicability of wikis in promoting different skills of foreign language learning students. The technologically coupled teaching techniques are an influential environment that plays an inevitable role in enhancing students’ learning, motivation, and participation in-class activities (Marsh, 2012). This interactive face of technology will enable the students to analyze the information according to their own learning needs and perspectives and will maintain their interest in learning as well. Wikis provide a collaborative platform for teaching as well as learning a foreign language. The instructors can create wikis and then assign the students with different group tasks to analyze and edit the pre-written content according to their own perception and analysis. The group tasks will produce cooperation and interaction among students as well as an exchange of ideas, information, and different learning perspectives will also be entertained. Different case studies report the use of wikis as technological advancement in language learning classrooms that resulted in higher levels of intrinsic motivation, better satisfaction with a learning environment, and better learning attitude in the students (Sucaromana, 2013).

As a foreign language instructor, using wikis in classrooms, as suggested by many researchers, I will prefer to focus on the variety of skills that the usage of a wiki can produce among language learning students. The basic challenge that is faced by the students according to my assessment is the lack of motivation to continuously pursue the learning over the course of time. Research evidence supports the use of web-based technologies such as wikis in language learning classrooms as they will be a sort of argumentative task that promotes the critical thinking and interests of students in a particular subject. Many pieces of research state that the students really appreciated the use of wikis as they are engaging, informative, and challenging as well to promote an interactive learning environment between them and their peers. A longitudinal study exploring the effect of wiki-based teaching on students’ motivation indicated the positive results in improving and promoting different learners’ abilities like reading, writing, speaking, etc. (Nejkovic & Tomic, 2011). As a teacher, it will be beneficial for students to swipe their wiki groups to ensure cooperation between every learner of the classroom and to avoid the monotony and loss of interest in language learning.

Pedagogical Interventions:

As stated earlier in the literature review, wikis can offer multiple different features in order to facilitate learning in foreign language learners. Research evidence supports the use of wikis in the formal classroom setups to furnish a group of learners that is adept in a foreign language as well as knows its practical uses in reading, writing, communication, etc. Wikis provide an autonomous learning environment that boosts the levels of intrinsic motivation in learners (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In addition to the use of wikis in foreign language learning, a supportive learning environment must be created by the instructor in classrooms where the learners are provided with external pressure-free ample choices (Reeve, 2002). As an instructor, I would say that it should also be kept in mind that an environment that provides several options without clear guidance will produce overwhelmed students struggling only for superficial knowledge and may lose focus and motivation in learning. As suggested by Reeve, I suggest the instructors produce a systematic and structured autonomy-supported environment.

The performance of students can also be improved by using wikis in language learning classrooms. Wikis can produce competence among students and enable them to look at the bigger picture of the knowledge through critical thinking and analysis rather than just passing the exams. Whatever the technology is being integrated with conventional teaching and learning methods, instructors must analyze the real-time applicability and challenges that can be encountered by them as well as students. Extra efforts may be required by the instructors to conjugate the technology with pedagogics in order to produce effective and positive outcomes. Therefore, both teachers and students need to perceive their role in the learning environment in depth in order to achieve meaningful and effective learning.

III. CONCLUSION:

Using the idea of SDT that autonomy resulting in positive outcomes, promotes intrinsic motivation and hence the more accredited learning experiences, it has been clearly depicted that this goal can be accomplished successfully by the use of wikis as technological advancement. The unique learning model offered by wikis can help the learners to acquire deep and practical knowledge of a foreign language. Wikis also motivate the students to collaborate for the creation and understanding of knowledge and develop practical language skills. This study has led to a tremendous increase in my knowledge and has cleared my perception about the beneficial aspects of using wikis in foreign language learning. Whatever the technological platform is, its utility depends upon the instructor that how well its beneficial aspects can be explored and made into use by him/her. It has broadened my vision about the role of teachers in motivating the students to learn about the digital platforms and their uses with regards to language learning sources and teachers must also learn about them as well.

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