Integrating the Online Collaborative Tool into Oral Training

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Abstract: This work-in-progress study explored students' motivation and usability in cloud-based collaborative learning from the *Intercultural Communication* course, investigating whether students enjoy synchronous collaborative learning. It also investigated the differences in perceptions of students engaged in collaborative learning using the Google Slides for generating the team project report and presentation and Padlet tools for peer review. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students were recruited into pairs or groups of three to work on the group project. The study aligned with those of previous studies in that the collaborators performed better than the individuals in the oral presentation as well as the depth of learning. Besides that, small group learners were more likely to feel motivated, and to perceive the learning process and experience positively. The results of this study reveal that by facilitating knowledge construction and peer scaffolding, Google Slides can play a significant role in enhancing students' motivation and willingness to communicate with peers; the Padlet tool provides the space for all groups to share their thoughts for improvement in learning a foreign language. To conclude, students provided positive feedback with peers at the same time, especially regarding the fact that they could see instant annotations using the Google Slides. The interesting thing was that technology could be embedded into the English class, making students feel more confident in learning from each other. Furthermore, pedagogical implications for future studies are proposed for English instructors using technology as a supplementary tool to assist students learning.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, collaborative learning, technology-enhanced language learning

1. Introduction

English oral training with the focus on cultural communication plays an important role in the technological college English curricula. Through such courses, technological college students can acquire not only basic communication skills, but also discipline-specific English vocabulary and genres in order to prepare for their future careers. However, the English-speaking ability of students at technical colleges need support to develop their English skills since their English proficiency level is relatively low. The contribution of this study is to embed cloud-based collaborative learning into English oral training courses, creating cultural scenarios relating to students' hometowns, as well as cultivating their ability to use simple English to introduce Taiwan's local culture in comparison with other foreign cultures. This study investigated the use of Google Slides software by Taiwanese EFL learners to edit group assignments. Based on Liu & Huang (2015), the research sought to explore whether an online collaborative activity would have a significant impact on both students' perceptions and intention to apply ICT literacy in the process of learning English.

2. Literature Review

The definition of collaborative learning follows the constructivist theory (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Papert, 1996), which proposes that active learners must build up knowledge through interactions with individuals and their surroundings (Schunk, 1996). In addition, the English oral training related to intercultural dimension helps students acquire linguistic and intercultural communicative competence. Byram's (2012) model makes a connection between EFL teaching and intercultural

communication; teachers have efficient teaching strategies for the contexts. In addition, language learning is composed of recognizing one's culture while respecting others.

Learning strategies are clear steps developed to solve educational problems. Strategies for learning English are applied to assist students with absorbing English knowledge according to skills and steps. They have a positive impact, guiding students to gain and organize knowledge, making language learning more joyful, and efficient eventually (Oxford, 1990). In addition, embedding technology into English learning, teachers can guide students to cultivate their language skills through real-life scenarios and meaningful learning experiences (Angelova & Zhao, 2016; Wu, Yen, & Marek, 2011). Overall, teachers explain from familiar to unfamiliar contents step by step. We can summarize that learners rely on their established schematic knowledge and the scaffolding of new systemic knowledge in English learning. The research question is as follows: Will a synchronous design via Google Slides and Padlet be more effective in enhancing students' learning motivation in oral training than an asynchronous design?

3. Methodology

Two intact *Intercultural Communication* classes at a technological college, including 52 students, participated in this experiment. They were formed groups of two or three. The control group with 24 participants utilized Google Slides individually on their assignment while the experimental group with 28 students worked as multiusers, employing Google Slides for cloud-based collaborative learning. Padlet was used as the peer review tool similar to a smart board, whose functions include ability to: (a) view other team's presentation videos; (b) write constructive comments; (c) read peers' comments; and (d) write their own team's reflection of the learning activity. Each group's Google Slides contained descriptions of their own culture. Both classes spent 45 minutes per time working together for 6 weeks. While they were working on the group project, the control group discussed issues face to face and worked on their own PowerPoint individually. On the other hand, the experimental group discussed the group PowerPoint and edited the file simultaneously via online annotations in Google Slides. Both groups spoke orally with one another. After 6 weeks, participants uploaded their projects with images to the online platform called Padlet, and then made an oral presentation for their final project. Students' group projects were evaluated by three teachers, including two native English speakers and one non-native English speaker.

Data collection consisted of pre- and post-tests, a learning motivation questionnaire, evaluations of group project presentations, and focus group interviews. The learning motivation questionnaire was modified from the instructional materials motivation scale (IMMS) established by Keller (2009). The original IMMS consists of four subscales, including attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS). In this study, the researcher modified and deleted some items, producing a modified IMMS with 25 items. It is hoped that the functions explored in this study can support English language learning and make learning more interesting for the participants. Results of the study may have broader implications for the use of cloud-based collaborative learning tool and Padlet as a peer review mechanism for enhancing learning experiences.

4. Results & Conclusion

Most of the 52 participants made satisfactory progress with a significant difference ($t= 6.69$, $p<.001$). The questionnaire items reached .802 of Cronbach's Alpha value. This preliminary work applied Google Slides to assist students in revising a group project in single-user mode and multiuser mode. It sought to explore the individual learning via Google Slides in the asynchronous design in comparison to the synchronous design, with the support of Padlet for peer review. This pilot study showed the effectiveness and intention to use multiuser mode compared to the control group employing the single-user mode.

Regarding the open-ended questions on a questionnaire, students reported enjoyed using Google Slides to work on their group project and Padlet to interact with other groups, especially the experimental group, who edited the same PPT file simultaneously and applied Padlet as the peer review platform. Through the focus group interview, students expressed positive feelings about editing the group project with peers at the same time, especially because they could give feedback

and see instant messages using the free software Google Slides. They thought it was interactive and interesting to work on the group project. In addition to that, they appreciated having two foreign guest speakers to evaluate their group oral presentations so that they could be sure that the foreign teachers understood their content and shared the ideas with them. The result was that technology could be integrated into the oral training with an emphasis on language and culture, allowing students to learn with each other from their own perspectives compared with other foreign cultures.

In summary, we have discussed the role of collaborative learning in English. It is significant that each person respects different perspectives on his/her own culture. Content should be practical and interesting, so students could reflect on their own culture relevant to others, and engage in meaningful cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, we encounter cultural barrier, but should respect other cultures. Therefore, culture and English learning are closely associated with each other, and using online collaborative tools for oral training in English and is helpful for learners of English as a foreign language.

Acknowledgements

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