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Use of Modern technology in Teaching Chinese

Panel: Modern education technologies and Chinese language teaching

Although technology has become embedded in our everyday lives, researchers and practitioners are constantly striving to find ways to incorporate technology in education, particularly in the field of language acquisition. The development of technology is reflected by a progressive proliferation of web resources and multimedia software for language teaching and learning, particularly computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which has become a very significant research area within applied linguistics.

This paper addresses a debate that has become central to recent developments regarding CALL: on the one hand, many academics have argued that individuals should be encouraged to engage in activities using modern technology in the target language as it provides learners with an opportunity to obtain rich input and output in the target language; on the other hand, others have expressed concern that technology may confine individuals to only participating within their existing networks and reduce immersion time spent in the target language and culture.

Thus, this paper seeks to address the usefulness of CALL in language acquisition through two case studies of twelve Year 4 and ten Year 1 students who were part of a Chinese language degree program in Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). The core focus of this paper is to explore learners' attitudes and beliefs towards the effect that using technology had on their written production skills. Data on beliefs and attitudes were collected through online surveys. Throughout the year, students were to submit assignments on a regular basis through either e-mail or WeChat. Results revealed that students written production skills improved significantly over the year. Furthermore, students indicated that producing written text using technology helped to facilitate their production at a considerably faster rate, increasing both confidence and motivation. Through a survey requesting students' experience of acquiring knowledge through these digital resources and implementing it through CALL-facilitated written and oral communication, this paper ultimately aims to demonstrate that modern technology can be a useful tool for second language learners of Chinese.