

Teaching and learning of primary children's literacy skills through distance modes

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing primary English learners' literacy skills teaching and learning through distance modes. It includes two teaching and learning (TL) situations. In the first TL situation, 28 English-major students deliver English lessons to 18 sixth-graders of one Taiwanese primary school through Skype. In the second TL situation, 37 English-major students observe their colleagues' teaching on site and the primary children' learning through Skype. The data of the study is collected from the researcher's class observation, the teaching demonstration video recordings, the university students' observation and reflection records, and the primary children's journal writing. The findings of the study will be reported in this presentation.

Keywords

primary children, literacy skills, distance modes, teacher education

1 Introduction

Some researchers (e.g. Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007) pointed out that one of the challenges of teacher education is the disconnection between teacher education programs and real classroom teaching experiences. The use of technology can be a solution to the problem. The implementation of technology in a classroom can create a space for reflection but still keep a face-to-face time.

However, nowadays, online forums and blogs were technology tools mostly used for blended learning in teacher education (Kim, Baylen, Leh, & Lin, 2015). Their use still cannot solve the above mentioned problem. Therefore, this study adopted distance modes to help pre-service teachers gain real teaching experiences in a blended teacher preparatory course.

2 Methods

2.1 Participants

This study has been implemented in one teacher preparatory course in the first semester of the school year 2018. It consisted of two TL situations. 28 university English-major students and 18 sixth graders were involved in the first situation. Meanwhile, 37 university English-major students were involved in the second situation.

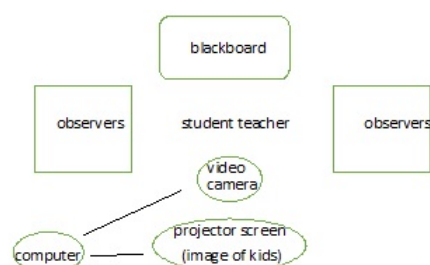


Figure 1: The university side

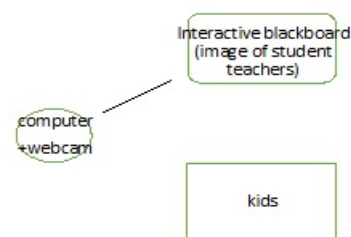


Figure 2: The primary school side

2.2 Procedure

The study lasted 7 weeks. In the first situation, 28 university students provided after-school English lessons to 18 sixth-graders of one primary school in Southern Taiwan. Divided into seven groups, they delivered one 40-minute English lesson based on their selected picture book to 18 sixth-graders through skype each week. In the second situation, 37 university students, trained to teach at the primary level after graduation, observed their colleagues' teaching demonstration on site and the primary children's learning through

Skype.

2.3 Data Collection

The data of the study was collected from the researcher's class observation, the teaching demonstration video recordings, the university students' observation and reflection records, and the primary children's journal writing.

3 Discussion

This study explored the factors affecting primary English learners' literacy skills teaching and learning through distance modes. Those factors included environments, technology, institutions of teaching and learning.

3.1 Environment

The environment of the two teaching settings influenced lesson delivery. In TL Situation One, the position of the blackboard in the teaching classroom of the university influenced the student teachers' reception of kids' image, which was fundamental to interactivity of two sides. In TL Situation Two, the main environmental factor was the brightness of the classroom in the primary school, which caused problems to the student teachers' reception of kids' images through Skype. The use of some aids (e.g. curtains) was a solution to this problem.

3.2 Technology

Without doubt, technology played a vital role in this study. Although the Internet connection quality was good in six sessions, there were always sound transmission lags occurring that influenced the student teachers' lesson delivery. They had to speak slower than usual in order that the children could listen clearly. In Session Five, the poor Internet connection quality disrupted image transmission several times, which frustrated the student teachers who were delivering the lesson.

3.3 Institutions

Two institutions were involved in this study.

3.3.1 The elementary school

In addition to the kids' participation, their teacher and one technician of the elementary school took part fully in this experience. The technician was in charge of all technology related problems of the elementary school side. As to the instructor, she managed all the discipline problems of her

class that helped the student teachers be able to focus themselves on lesson delivery. In addition, she provided kids' feedback about the lessons and the student teachers, as well as gave suggestions and feedback about the student teachers' teaching. Her active contributions not only allowed the student teachers to get better grasp of the kids' reactions, but also inspired their teaching.

3.3.2 The university

In terms of the university side, the students, their teacher and one technician were engaged in the study. When the student teachers delivered lessons, their classmates observed their teaching and provided after-class written feedback on their demonstration. The teacher was responsible for bridging information gaps between the two sides. She also offered the student teachers' pre-teaching training, in-classroom assistance and post-teaching oral feedback on lesson delivery. Moreover, one technician from the university provided great technical help in this study.

4 Conclusion

The above findings revealed that in this study, the factors influencing learners' literacy skills teaching and learning through distance modes were concerning technology, the teaching and learning environments, and the people of the two institutions engaged in the study. Collaboration among all the involved people was key to success of teaching and learning.

Although most of those factors were controllable, the Internet lag seemed unavoidable in this study. Therefore, it is recommended that the teaching side can take precautions before teaching in order to lower negative teaching and learning effects as much as possible.

5 References

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