The Effectiveness of Integrating ALC NetAcademy Software into a Compulsory English Language Curriculum

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Although computer technologies and facilities are now common, Japanese universities and colleges struggle with issues related to effective implementation of e-learning, including types of program, integration of e-learning into a curriculum, monitoring of student participation, maintenance of student motivation, and evaluation. Many universities in Japan have selected ALC NetAcademy software to supplement English language learning, and institutions approach the use of the program in different ways.

This presentation is a case study of the introduction and evolution over three years of a compulsory guided self-study program for students enrolled in the general education program at Kyoto Women's University and Junior College. The goal of English instruction in this program is to consolidate and expand student knowledge of—and confidence and proficiency in—English. Over and above the opportunities presented in face-to-face lessons, the guided self-study units of the ALC NetAcademy software encourage vocabulary development, allow students to interact with a range of reading and listening text types, and offer grammatical support to students as needed. Using the software, students encounter TOEIC practice tests, a useful scaffold within which to learn and practice strategies for test taking, listening, and reading.

The presenters will report on program development, evaluation methods, and results to date using data from both school-wide student perception surveys and results of practice TOIEC tests. The problems and successes of the program, including the challenge of maintaining learner motivation and difficulties of integrating the software into the general education program will also be addressed.

This program has seen increasing acceptance by students and teachers. It is the hope of the presenters that this case study will increase understanding of how such software can be utilized within a general English language program with a view to improving foreign language education in Japan over the coming years.

Constructing "Autonomous Learning Models" Based on English Proficiency Levels: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

A. Kochiyama (Meisei U.)

Learners' motivation and autonomy are key determinants in language acquisition. Whereas, previous researchers have focused on the impact of each factor on language acquisition, this study proposes a comprehensive layered model incorporating autonomy, motivation and cognitive strategy use in determining English language proficiency. The aim of the study is to validate that "autonomous learning models vary" depending on learners' proficiency levels. The study is based on data that the researcher collected from 2500 students studying English at universities in the Kanto area between April 2008 and December 2010. The STEP Test was used to measure their
English language proficiency. A survey questionnaire, adapted from Ichikawa and Pintrich, was used to measure levels of motivation (content-related motivation and non-content-related motivation), autonomy (self-determination, self-efficacy and self-regulation) and cognitive strategy use. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to validate the models. In addition, interviews were conducted with learners in order to qualitatively affirm the quantitative results.

The results showed that models for determining English language performance vary based on proficiency. The results of this study suggest that English language performance in lower, middle and upper levels of proficiency can be explained by three different models, where the strengths and structures of the relationships of constructs in the models are different. Compared with the upper-level group, learners in the middle-level group lack sufficient motives to affect self-determination. In the lower-level group, learners lack adequate self-efficacy to promote self-determination and self-regulation, which is evident in the middle and upper-level groups.

Among various findings derived from qualitative analysis of the interviews, it was found that by setting a clear goal, both learner motivation as well as interest in learning content are promoted. Because small achievements serve to develop self-efficacy, an effective method to promote learner motivation is to break a goal down into small steps.

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Readability and Vocabulary Level of Difficulty in Reading Passages in University Entrance Exams in Japan

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It is often said that English sections of Japanese university entrance exams are too difficult for senior high school students, and validity and reliability of the tests are low. To address this issue, we have examined the readability and vocabulary frequency levels of reading passages in the Center Exam (national test) and in the entrance exams of four major private Kansai-area universities in 2005 and 2008. We found that the difficulty of the entrance exams, both in terms of readability and vocabulary levels, may have been a problem, though the Center Exam was easier. In this presentation, I will summarize the previous studies and compare the results for 2010 with those for the 2005 and 2008 exams for the same universities, and argue that the same potential problems still exist. I will also examine the lexical coverage of the tests, based on the words that the students have studied in senior and junior high schools and look at how much vocabulary overlaps in various exams in the same university.

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Teacher Training for English Activities in Elementary School

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1. 目的

小学校教員は、外国語活動の専門的な知識を身に付ける機会がなかったため、指導を行うことへの不安を抱えている。発表者は外国語活動の現場をサポートするために、指導者育成や出張講義を行っ