Toward learner self-contained strategies: Optimizing E-learning in the undergraduate ESP

Itakura, Hiroyo (Hokkaido Pharmaceutical University School of Pharmacy)
Yamada, Megumi (Hokkaido Pharmaceutical University School of Pharmacy)

Hokkaido Pharmaceutical University first introduced an E-learning based program in 2009 as a teaching aid to the freshmen's first-semester English required subject (ESP for pharmaceutical sciences). It was expected to play a role not only in the so-called remedial program for the students of low proficiency but also for all the students that were endeavoring for good results in English required subjects, as well as general English proficiency shown in the tests such as TOEIC. Since then, trying to see the effect further, we have been using the program all through the freshman year and the sophomore year. Our syllabus indicated clearly how to treat the E-learning in the academic assessment of the given English subjects.

The present study investigated the effect and problem of using an E-learning based program in the undergraduate English courses in terms of learners' motivation raising and instructors' control. The method of questionnaire, comprising 46 items, was used with the participants of 236 freshmen and 223 sophomores. Those freshmen were given more lenient control and the sophomores were on the tight control. The analyses of the response indicated that the strict control and frequent intervention by the instructor did have the learners catch up with the designated learning schedule but resulted in lower appreciation of the program. The participants on the more lenient control actually evaluated the program in the positive way, and they show high motivation for other E-learning programs on the individual basis. The results suggested that learners' self contained learning schedule would be the key for the more effective and optimal use of E-learning.

Hiroyo Itakura has majored in English Literature, and received Ph.D. in English Literature from Hokkaido University. Her current research interests include British and American Literature as well as ESL/EFL acquisition and development, especially for healthcare workers including pharmacists. She is an associate professor of English at the Department of Pharmacy, Hokkaido Pharmaceutical University School of Pharmacy.

Megumi Yamada is a professor of English at the Department of Pharmacy, Hokkaido Pharmaceutical University School of Pharmacy. Her research interests include ESL/EFL acquisition and development, English communication for healthcare workers, and further education for pharmacists. She has publications in the area of cognitive sciences (language) and ESP.