
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Lorna Uden is Emeritus Professor of IT Systems in the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology at Staffordshire University. Her research interests include technology learning, HCI, activity theory, big data, knowledge management, web engineering, multimedia, e-business, service science and innovation, mobile computing, cloud computing, social media, and problem-based learning.

Welcome to V10N2 issue of *IJLT*. This issue consists of four papers. The first paper is, 'Using text and voice chat modes to enhance students' performance in discourse functions' by Watheq Aljassim and Ali AbuSeileek. According to these authors, learning through CMC chat is more useful in learning discourse functions than regular instruction. CMC chat offers opportunity to the students to practice language in real situational conversations, test communicative skills, and communicate with each other in hands-on activities. CMC chat encourages students in individual inquiry and collaborative efforts and gives them a bigger role in language learning. Students can use both techniques (text chat and voice chat) in practicing discourse functions. They enable the student to develop according to his/her own learning speed and wish by taking into consideration the characteristics of the learner. Attention should be paid to real-life dialogues when teaching discourse functions. Students often perform better through meaningful practice in the language they need to master in order to be able to perform important linguistics functions, i.e., practice in language needed to communicate effectively.

In their paper, these authors explore the effect of using text and voice chat modes on undergraduate EFL students' performance in discourse functions in English. Fifty-one undergraduate male and female students were selected as the study sample. They were randomly assigned into three groups, two experimental (CMC text chat and voice chat) and one control group (regular instruction). A pre-post test to measure students' performance in discourse functions was administered to all students who participated in the study. The findings of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental (CMC chat) groups and the control group (regular instruction) in favour of the experimental groups. Furthermore, the findings revealed that both of the text and voice chat groups improved discourse functions in the same way. The findings revealed that there were no significant differences between the mean scores due to technique (text chat and voice chat). The results also revealed there was no statistically significant correlation between chat modes and experimental group students' performance on the discourse functions. Further research is needed to verify the effectiveness of the finding.

The second paper is, 'Instructional principles and practices in a digital storytelling one-to-one laptop English language program' by Phillip A. Towndrow. In this paper, Towndrow reports research findings from a study involving an English language teacher's experiences of working with various materials in a digital storytelling project. There are two interrelated inquiry-based questions guiding the discussion ahead:

- 1 How is language taught and used in a secondary school digital storytelling project?
- 2 What roles can print-based and digital materials play in one-to-one laptop digital storytelling?

This study presents a narrative account of an English teacher's experiences of teaching digital storytelling in the context of a school-wide one-to-one laptop program. The results show that the transfer of exemplary language performance from the oral physical realm is not as straightforward as it first appears. While there is certainly potential to enhance storytelling digitally, there is also a need to understand and practice how stories are constructed and how meaning making is designed and realised through various semiotic modes of representation.

There are some limitations with single-case narratives in educational research. Notably, it is not possible to generalise to other contexts nor is it desirable to do so. Rather, the merit of the material resides in its trustworthiness. First, the data originated from a particular situation and had a learning purpose in mind. In line with a specific school initiative, teacher Cindy wanted to find out more, through critical reflection, about her teaching and her students' learning. Second, Cindy collaborated to generate and analyse the data, and no fixed or predetermined theoretical agenda was proposed at the beginning. Finally, there is further meaning-making possible. The narrative account is open to the judgements of teachers and researchers in three areas pertaining to qualitative work:

- 1 its level of descriptive detail
- 2 the accuracy of interpretations offered as viewed from the perspectives of the participants involved
- 3 the usefulness of the explanations of phenomena mentioned in furthering theoretical and practical understandings.

The third paper is, 'Technology improves undergraduate sentence-level writing skills' by Patsy Tinsley McGill and Murray R. Millson. These authors argue that graduating university seniors are often found to lack proficient writing skills. This places a heavy financial burden on employers and puts job-seeking new graduates at risk. They conducted research of Capstone students at a medium-sized western public university in the USA. The study was to assess whether a technology-based writing tutorial and assessment tool, developed by the capstone instructor, would result in an increased level of sentence-level writing proficiency. The research question that is investigated in the study is, 'Does the technology-based, sentence-level writing tutorial and assessment environment result in superior student writing skills when compared to the paper-based writing improvement methods?' A quasi-experiment was performed to investigate this question. It was found that the technology-based tutorial and assessment environment improved student writing over that of control group methods. The results of this study suggest that the use of such a treatment that was developed using an open-source learning

management system platform can be effective in improving sentence-level skills that students have difficulty mastering throughout college.

However, there are limitations in this research. The major limitation of the *Write Right* research was the inability to randomly select students from the university student population or a larger population for participation in experimental groups, and then to randomly create control and treatment groups from the students randomly selected to participate in our research. These limitations precluded the researchers from directly inferring the study findings from the samples employed to the populations of which the students were a part or to the larger population of all students beyond the campus that participated in this study. Moreover, there were a limited number of student respondents who did not fully complete either the *Write Right* assessments or the demographic profiles to provide the data necessary for them to be included in the analysis phase of this research. Given these factors, the findings of this study are only and narrowly directly generalisable to the business students on the campus that participated in this study.

The final paper is, 'Math word problem solving by English learners and English primary students in an intelligent tutoring system' by Carole R. Beal and Federico Cirett Galan. According to Beal and Galan, Math word problem solving in an online tutoring system was compared for high school students who were native speakers of English (English primary) and their peers who were learning English (English learners). Word problems were written in English, the language of instruction. Data records for word problems that had been solved by students in both language groups were located and compared. Results indicated that the English learners were less likely to answer correctly, had more incorrect answer attempts, and took longer per problem on average than English primary students. When word problems were matched for math operation, students in both language groups performed worse on problems with more challenging text. There were no differences for the two language groups with regard to self-reported math motivation, plans to attend college, or off-task ('gaming') behaviour, suggesting that the lower performance of the English learners could not be attributed to lower effort.

The author argues that the results point to the need to expand the current emphasis on supporting English learners in classroom discourse to include support for the reading skills involved in interpreting word problems. There is a need for more research on how English learners acquire information from mathematical text, and pointed out that this is an understudied area.