



Gi-Zen Liu

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Designing EFL learning through hybrid instruction

Gi-Zen Liu describes a new instructional design theory (IDT) for teaching EFL to college freshmen in Taiwan

Values

The rationale for the new IDT is that Taiwanese EFL instructors need an IDT for guiding their teaching in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in hybrid instruction courses. The IDT was developed based on the following values.

Learning-focused

Barr and Tagg (1995) maintain that current undergraduate education has experienced a shift from instructional paradigm to learning paradigm, which is a change 'from a focus on presenting material to a focus on making sure that learners' needs are met' (Reigeluth, 1999, 19). I take a learning-focus as one of my values because I believe the purpose of teaching EFL is to help learners develop their communicative competence instead of mechanically teaching them the four language skills.

Customized learning

Learning theories and studies on individual differences underscore that individuals learn their individual values differently. I value methods which allow students to learn at their own pace and address a wide range of interesting topics under the same criteria. Thus, during the same class time, students can have flexibility on individual learning and good learning performance by doing so.

Active learning

When learning a foreign language, students need 'active mental engagement' and appropriate learning strategies to help them become better, effective, and active learners (NSFLLP, 1996). I value instruction that requires students to actively participate in the classroom and online learning, and in discussions and learning activities in pairs or groups. Active learning is important because it is aligned with the characteristics of the information age in which students must take a greater share in collaborative decision making.

Interactive learning

I value methods that require students to use oral or written English to interact meaningfully with other learners or the instructor to develop their English both in classroom and Web-based environment.

Some of the interactive learning activities should be conducted through pairs and teams. Interactive learning is important in that students learn communicative skills, including negotiation of meaning, paraphrasing, critical thinking, and content knowledge through written or oral communication.

Developing a language skill by using it

Freshman students are expected to write like native speakers at an appropriate proficiency level, so they need to practice writing in every learning opportunity in and beyond the classroom. The online environment provides another learning place. This value (developing a language skill by using it) applies to other language skills, including reading, speaking, and listening.

Features

Readers should understand that the IDT contains the following features.

E-learning

This IDT requires some language learning activities to be conducted on the Internet. 'E-learning is networked, which makes it capable of instant updating, storage/retrieval, distribution and sharing of instruction or information' (Rosenberg, 2001, 28). So the networked computer is the means for 'e-learning'.

The instructor as a facilitator

In the information-age paradigm of instruction, students are provided with more self-directed learning activities than has traditionally been the case. Thus the instructor is more like a facilitator—facilitating students' learning and development in every way possible (e.g., scaffolding, problem-based learning).

Conclusion

Since an IDT focuses on how to do teaching (design instruction) in a realistic, meaningful context with the consideration of effectiveness, efficiency, and appeal (Reigeluth, 1999), an instructor should develop his or her hybrid instruction based on identified values to provide information-age EFL learning.

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References available from the author by request