FACTORS THAT MAKES LANGUAGE LEARNING SUSTAINABLE:
CONSIDERATION FROM QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY TOWARD
JAPANESE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

As evidenced by many previous studies emphasizing the social nature of learning, one of the most significant outcomes should be that students learn how to learn, and that may not be realized when learning by themselves. The same is true with language learning context. The author have taught English as a foreign language to university students in Japan using self-study-fashioned computer-assisted language learning (CALL) system. Learners were divided into 2 groups: The teacher implemented a proactive intervention when learners struggle with the assignments within built-in blog society for one group; for the other group, the teacher displayed a wait-and-see attitude in general, and replied individually only when received inquiries from students. Within the former group, learners’ society was gradually formed under the common objectives, however, there were not observed within the latter group. The previous survey result showed that both learning time and the amounts of the completed tasks increased throughout the training period within the group in which the students were sharing each other’s comments on the blog under the teacher’s vigorous intervention, whereas for the other condition, few students completed many more tasks on CALL than the weekly obligatory assignment. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors that influenced learners’ behavior or decision on learning by analyzing free description parts of questionnaire sheet. Participants were 21 Japanese university students, and they were to use self-study-fashioned CALL system for 4 months outside the classroom. Pre-test and post-test design were carried out, pooled learning log data on CALL system at both test phase and training phase, and recorded all posts and replies from students and the teacher. Text mining techniques were carried out to examine the relationship between learners’ behavior (qualitative data) during studying on their own using self-paced CALL and their training or its effects (which can be estimated by some quantitative amounts such as the degree of their improvements on language proficiency, length of learning time, amounts of tasks they reached completion, and so on). Findings indicate that learners within the collaborative learning society tended to get interested in “learning process” or “their own or other students’ learning method”. The tendency were observed more frequently on the students whose length of learning time, amount of completed tasks, and accuracy improved throughout the training period. On the other hand, learners in the isolated learning circumstance tended to put much value on “easiness of the completion of assignments” or “grade point of current class”; that is, they are more interested in their own learning outcomes. The results implicate that learners who grow interests in learning process or the existence of other learners aiming to achieve the common objectives would be willing to devote themselves to study sustainably.

Keywords: Learning community, computer-supported collaborative learning, text mining, qualitative analysis, e-learning, blogging.