

The Tools of the Web Assisted Foreign Language Instruction

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to review the asynchronous and synchronous tools of the Web assisted foreign language instruction. This study was conducted on the base of literature survey, so the findings was interpreted and evaluated for the purpose of the study. In the study, firstly, we were preferred to give a brief description of the each Web tools than explained the related research finding and some applications, which were to deals with the web assisted foreign language instruction. The web assisted foreign language instruction tools were divided in two main options. The main asynchronous option tools are e-mail, listserv, online forms/threaded discussions/ notes files, on-line quizzes/test and electronic journals. The main asynchronous option tools are Internet Relay Chat (IRC), Web radio, Web-based videoconferencing and MOOs. The end of this research researcher recommended that there are needs to new researches on the Web assisted foreign language instruction.

Key words: Educational technology, teaching-learning process, Internet, Web tools, Web-assisted foreign language instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Students learn in many ways-by seeing and hearing; reflecting and acting; reasoning logically and intuitively; memorizing and visualizing. Teaching methods also vary. Some instructors lecture, others demonstrate or discuss; some focus on rules and others demonstrate or discuss; some focus on examples; some emphasize memory and others understandings; some prefers to use audio-visual tools; some always want to use new technology in the classroom.

WWW (Web) is a new technology, which is most popular and used Internet tools, serves increasingly as a communication facilitator. Web-mediated communication is a powerful interaction medium (e.g., e-mail, group conferencing, and Internet Relay Chat), that enables students to communicate with peers, teachers, and experts and conduct collaborative work (Mioduser & et al, 2000). The Web also serves as an instructional delivery medium. Numerous Web sites provide digital educational activities and network-based courses for all grade levels in a large number of subjects (Hackbarth, 1997). The conception of the Web as a learning environment is instantiated in varied forms, from online versions of traditional computer assisted instruction to innovative individual and group virtual-learning modes (Mioduser & et al, 2000).

Web-assisted instruction emerges to as a new technology in teaching-learning process. Web-assisted instruction and Web-based instruction have got similar characteristics but they are different from each other. Web-assisted instruction is used with traditional or other instructional methods. As it is known, instruction is a sub dimension of educational technology. Educational technology can be defined that, “as the theory and practice of design, development, utilization,

management and evaluation of process and resources for learning” (Heinich & others, 1996). So, educational technology is absolutely related to all instruction disciplines that it can be conducted specific applications and researches on the disciplines. Foreign or second language instruction is included in these disciplines which are related to education technology.

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FINDINGS

1. Asynchronous Options

An asynchronous interaction creates a reciprocal interchange between the learner and the instructional material, instructor, or other learners. Asynchronous interactions do not require the learners or instructor to be on-line at the same time. Asynchronous interactions may result in both immediate and delayed feedback. Immediate feedback happens when programs automatically score quizzes or link documents. Learners may experience delay in learner-to-learner and learner-to-instructor feedback. These interactions require time for the instructor and other learners to respond to listserv, forum, and e-mail messages (Driscoll, 1998).

a. E-Mail

Electronic mail (E-mail) was in use before the Internet as we know it today even existed and is probably the most commonly used Internet application. E-mail enables learners to send message over the Internet or intranet. Many learners are familiar with e-mail and need little instruction. In foreign language instruction process, like a private conversation, e-mail is an excellent way for instructor and learner to communicate. Conversations can also be shared with others, if desired.

With a single e-mail account, foreign language teachers and students can integrate e-mail-based activities into their curriculum (LeLoup, 1997). For example, international key pal projects that enable students to correspond with native speakers of the target language are easily implement where participants have the necessary access, equipment, and foreign contacts (Knight, 1994; Shelly, 1996).

In more complex e-mail interactions, an expert can reply to a questions and the response can be shared with the entire class. For example, a student may have a question that only an expert can answer. The student can send an e-mail to the appropriate expert and copy his or her instructor the instructor can also a learner’s question and the expert’s reply, realize the answer is important for all students, and forward the reply to the entire class (Driscoll, 1998).

E-mail is an excellent tool for students whose first language is not English because they can take whatever time they need to read and comprehend e-mail exchange. On the Internet, there is a lot of web-based e-mail sites gives free e-mail accounts who want to take. For example, Yahoo and Hotmail are most known and using Web-based e-mail sites by the Internet users.

Warschauer (1997) provided an exceptional good research review and analysis of the value of e-mail for foreign language learning. Warschauer’s review showed greater participation by foreign language students via e-mail communication than via face to face discussion.

Participation is enhanced because e-mail communication reduces context clues related to race, gender, handicap, accent, and status; reduces non-verbal cues that can intimate; allows individuals to contribute at their own time and pace encourages people to state their own opinions rather than rapidly concurring with others, and breaks the pattern of teacher-dominated discourse. E-mail can improve the quality of discourse. Comparing e-mail discourse with oral classroom discourse, researchers found that students used more complex language with a wider range of functions, were more accurate, and produced stronger arguments.

Warschauer (1997) review indicated that e-mail can help foreign language learners develop their analytical, narrative, and descriptive writing styles especially when used internationally, e-mail can greatly enhance the cultural awareness of foreign language students.

For example, Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connection (IECC) is a free teaching.com service to help teachers link with partners in other cultures and countries for email classroom pen-pal and other project exchanges. Since its creation in 1992, IECC has distributed over 28,000 requests for e-mail partnerships (<http://www.iecc.org/>).

b. Listserv

A listserv is a software product that manages e-mail among a group of people. Using a computer server, the listserv maintains the people's names and electronic mail addresses. Learners send messages addressed to list; the server forwards the messages to all other members.

Hundreds of lists of interest to language teachers are available on the Web (you should visit <http://www.cal.org/ericcl/faqs/rgos/flint.html> and become a member a listserv which is your interest and language). Some are service lists such as the LLTI (language Learning and technology International) list, which distributes information about all aspects of the technology used in language teaching; IECC list, which provides a service for teachers seeking partner classrooms for international and cross-cultural electronic mail exchanges. Others are language specific and address topics as their membership warrants. An others listserv listserv@listserv.dli.com is sending the daily e-mail the subscriber. The topics are relates to new words, games, puzzles, crossword, story, grammar and etc. In addition some listserv gives the study guide or tips about English as a second language learning.

c. Online forms/threaded discussions/ notes files

An online forum is a computer service where people can post messages, share solutions, ask questions, debate ideas, and read about topics of interest. Online forums, notes files, notes conferences, threaded discussions, bulletin boards, news groups, computer conferences, and e-forms technically refer to distinct kinds of web-mediated communication (Driscoll, 1998).

Like e-mail and listserv tools, forum products require a certain level of reading and writing ability. To benefit from reading one other's work, people must be able to communicate effectively (Driscoll, 1998).

Educators can use newsgroups to host student discussions on curriculum topics. Private newsgroup, accessible only by your students, have the advantage of leaving all messages in an archive listing, viewable at any time, whereas Internet mailing list messages exist only in individual mail boxes and may easily be deleted or lost (Odasz, 2000).

d. On-line Quizzes/Test

Quizzes and test are another type of asynchronous interaction. On-line quizzes and tests enable the learners to assess to progress or mastery of a topic. On the Web sites are used automatic scoring mechanisms to furnish immediate scores and include a rationale of the test

items that explains the right answers. Make feedback positive, identify the items learners scored high on and provide the correct answers for incorrect items (Driscoll, 1998).

Several test formats can be used to add interactivity to asynchronous Web-assisted foreign language instruction. Foreign language teachers should create the on-line quiz/test using the freeware software *HotPotatoes* from the University of Victoria Language Center. This software can be used to create interactive multiple-choice, short answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching, ordering, and gap-fill exercises for the Web.

There are many advantages to using on-line quiz/testing (Cardwell, 2000).

- There is always option of printing the test, if needed.
- The student can take the test when and where appropriate.
- There are at least two reasons for taking tests; assess knowledge and provide feedback so students can improve their abilities. These web-assisted on-line tests provide both.
- The quiz/test is self-grading, freeing the teacher to work with other students.
- The students may compete with the other international students by on-line or off-line.

e. Electronic Journals

Several electronic journals target foreign language professionals or students. Generally, these journals are free, are published monthly or quarterly, and do not exist in paper form. There are a number of reasons for publishing a journal electronically. First, by using electronic communications technologies, electronic journals can reach a large and diverse audience in a timely manner. Second, the hypermedia nature of Web-based journals enables articles to links to related background information located elsewhere on the web. Third, reminds to learners chat time or other activities on the Web (For example, <http://www.peakenglish.com/index.jsp>). Of particular interest is “Language Learning & Technology,” which disseminates research on issues related to technology and language education (<http://llt.msu.edu/>). Another journal that deals with timely topics in language education is “Teaching English as a Foreign Language: An Electronic Journal, (<http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ>). [Agora Newsletter](#) provides timely articles for foreign language teachers as well as a calendar of events, professional language news, a review of online resources, and featured products and publishers.

2. Synchronous Options

Synchronous interactions are only possible when instructor and learners are working together in real-time. It requires a set of tools that enable learners to see, hear, and/or share applications across the Internet or on the web environment. Synchronous interaction have got some advantages when are used in the foreign language teaching-learning process.

- *Live group learning and immediate feedback*

The ability to bring a group of learners together for discussions, brainstorming, case-study analysis, debates, and project work in the real time is possible in this form of Web-assisted instruction. Web-assisted instruction sites allow immediate feedback on ideas, extension of suggestions, and building of consensus. Real-time interaction reveals the tone and personality of learners and creates a greater sense of presence (Driscoll, 1998).

- *Just-in-time development*

The Just-in-time development and delivery capabilities of Web-assisted instruction are ideal for providing skills and knowledge for which learners cannot wait. Using tools such as web-based audio conferencing, Web videoconferencing, and application sharing, corporations can deliver programs or knowledge without long development cycles.

- *Range of Tools.*

Some synchronous tools can be combined with asynchronous tools such as video clips, text, images, animation, polling, and quizzing. Instructors and learners can illustrate their ideas and take the class in unanticipated directions. If the instructor that a class lacks basic skills, he or she digress to review basics with a whiteboard or a visit to a Website that provides fundamentals skills. After all learners have the prerequisite skills, the instructor can begin teaching the topic (Driscoll, 1998).

a. Internet Relay Chat (IRC)

Internet relay chat (IRC) is real-time, text based conferencing via the Internet or an intranet. IRC “rooms” offer real-time communication between two or more people. They are similar to meeting or conference calls; the chats take place in the form of moderated discussions, private conversations, and question-and-answer forms.

Most chat systems allow aliases. Discussions are often trivial or sexually oriented, which is why many schools prohibit student access to chat systems. But thoughtful use of chat systems can yield very real educational benefits. For example, chat can allow students to read and share more information than a regular classroom discussion. We speak at approximately 120 words per minute, and only one person can effectively speak at a time. And, classroom discussions are limited to participants in the class and onsite visitors. If students chat with other groups of students in remote locations, they can have access to information and opinions outside their classroom. And, because more than one student can type at a time and we read 400-1000 words per minute, they can be exposed to more information in the same amount of time. Finally, transcripts of the chat sessions can be printed so that students don't have to scramble to take notes (Odasz, 2000).

On the Internet hundreds of foreign language channels exist on the Web-based environment, with names usually reflecting the topics and language discussed (e.g. French, Spanish, and English). Private closed channels can also be created for use in the classroom.

As foreign language teacher decided to use IRC in the teaching learning process, it should be gives positive effect on the student language learning.

b. Web Radio

Classroom activities could include broadcasting a student-created radio program or sampling radio programs from all over the world. A classroom exchange of student-created radio programs would ensure an audience for both sides.

At www.real.com you can download a program that gives clickable access to more than 1.000 radio stations. In addition, you should access <http://windowsmedia.com/radiotuner/default.asp> web page and can find a radio station to your needs.

In Foreign language teaching, students and foreign language teachers connect to BBC World Service web site (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/) and can listen to news, sports or other

events on the Web. This application similar to known FM or other radio channels but it is different. Because listener or students can be listen to radio by the computer. It is not important geographical place where the listener to be find. Web-mediated radio can be used for improve of the listening skills by the students.

c. Web-Based Videoconferencing

Web-based videoconferencing is the ability to transmit audio and video images to multiple learners via Internet or intranet. Like real-time audio, Web-based video offers more than one environment. But, Web-based video conferencing depends on the speed of Internet access.

Like live classroom instruction, Web-based videoconferencing allows participants to see and hear one other. Learners communicate simply by talking, without text-chat or threaded discussion. Learners not only can hear others' voices, but they can see facial expression and body language as well. In addition, a live videoconference can be supplemented with digital media such as HTML pages, images, video clips, and animations, and with actual 3D objects such as paper-based graphics and artifacts using a document camera to digitize pictures, objects, and hard copy text. Digital cameras eliminate the need for scanning, creating, or preparing files in advance (Driscoll, 1998).

For instructional applications, it's fun to play with, questionable in its readiness for teaching online, but well worth getting your students involved. The camera can be used for many creative classroom activities, such as creating student videos and/or still pictures. Automatic updates of a video picture on school Web pages (Odasz, 2000).

d. MOOs

One interesting type of interactivity involves synchronous on line chat between participants in a real time talk community: a MOO. MOO stands for MUD Object Oriented (MOO), with MUD itself being an acronym for Multi-User Dungeon. MOO evolved from MUD, which traces its origin to the genre of dungeon and dragon role playing games.

Frizler (1995) states that MOOs are a great language learning tool. Whenever a language student wants to practice writing and "talking" at the same time, s/he can just log on. S/he is writing to communicate with a real audience. Naturally in a MOO environment, free-flowing communication of a highly interactive kind is to be expected. Nevertheless, the teacher can help students plan for and organize such complex learning experiences, by rehearsing useful topic-based language with the students and by explaining Internet etiquette as it applies specifically to MOOs. The end goal should be to improve the student's communicative abilities by cultivating higher-order thinking as defined in Bloom et al.'s taxonomy (Harrell, 2000).

For information on direct links to MOOs, you should visit to <http://www.itp.berkeley.edu/~thorne/MOO.html> page.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study, the researchers were reached that main result. A lot of Web tools were used in the foreign language teaching-learning process. This opportunity should offer more than one alternative the foreign language teacher to apply and integrate these tools into the instruction a meaningful way. The researchers are recommended that there are needed new researches which tools more effective on the student learning.

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