A Study of the Moodle System and its Application to Language Learning

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As the development of e-learning technology has shifted educational paradigm, the innovative teaching and learning methodology using social e-learning software has been suggested. Technology-assisted instruction supports self-regulated learning, enabling learners to engage in interactive class activities. Among the social e-learning software, Moodle, known for its many interactive and social features, has been implemented as an instruction and learning system at the university level. Nevertheless, it has not been investigated yet how the Moodle system is being effectively utilized to support self-regulated learning. So this study aims to examine how the Moodle system functions to support interactive and self-regulated learning for pre-service English teachers on the basis of their feedback about the Moodle-based activities. In addition, the analysis was also conducted to find out which features of Moodle reflect constructivist pedagogy. The result of the study shows that Moodle-assisted instruction benefited students to have more chances to interact with their peers and their instructor. It was also found that the versatile features of the system have a lot of potential to be utilized effectively as a supplementary tool for language learning. It is recommended that for optimal outcome from Moodle-based course, students’ positive attitudes toward technology-based instruction and robust technological environments for operating the system should be set.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the decades the social and technological transformation has impacted our lives, and it led to new paradigm of education and learning. This change has also influenced the view of what education is for. Nowadays it is considered that getting life skills and resources are more important than learning knowledge passively. Thus, the importance of

* This study was supported by Research fund of Seoul National University of Education in 2012.
learning through life is also significantly recognized (Fischer & Konomi, 2005; Owen, Grant, Sayers & Facer, 2006). Along with this change our society has been moving toward knowledge-based society in which creative and self-regulated individuals are supported. In digital age it is very common that people meet and collaborate, learn from each other and produce new digital resources. The user generated contents and data, resource sharing, and collaborative efforts with innovative social software application signal that web is a powerful platform (Lee & McLoughlin, 2010). These innovative technologies have urged teachers to have many useful tools that can be utilized to improve their teaching and learning methodology. Thus teachers are expected to handle new instructional tools to better their lesson.

The development of instructional technology tools has also influenced teaching a language (Kang, 2010; Lee & Kim, 2011). In particular, technologies provided interactive language learning environments in which language learners easily get access to socially constructed environment. Knowledge is meaningful only if it is practiced in social context (Yamen, 2010). In the same vein, Vygotsky’s social constructivism also assumes that learners build their knowledge while interacting with their peers (Hodson & Hodson, 1998). This perspective supports that collaboration among learners is essential element in learning process. Hence, so far a lot of research has been conducted regarding use of technology tools and learning management systems for teaching a language. These studies (Kang, 2010; Park, 2012; Ruiperez, 2002) revealed that there are many good quality of learning manage systems that are integrated with various features to encourage self-regulated learning. The learning management systems have been considered as an ideal environment for language learning since it enables learners to get easy access to socially constructed contexts and to have opportunities that learners can engage in authentic communication. As an example of these systems, Moodle is becoming one of the popular learning management systems in Korea.

Moodle is known for a convenient tool to connect learners with each other and to increase the chances for the learners to engage in self-regulated learning. So it can be anticipated that if versatile features of the Moodle system are utilized in language teaching and learning, instruction can be very dynamic and efficient. Nevertheless, how to make use of the features of Moodle in language learning has not been seriously investigated. On the other hand, due to the changing educational technology environment, teachers are expected to handle the instructional tools efficiently to improve their lesson. Language teachers play a role as a helper for their students as well as a knowledge provider to their students. This perspective of the teacher’s role in class assumes the significance of students’ self-directed learning. E-learning social software can help teachers to perform these missions. Hence, technology-based training education should be included in a pre-service teacher education program.