
Action research, as a form of applied research, has gained attention in language teacher education. This paper reports a study on how a language teacher has improved his own online instruction through action research in collaboration with a colleague. The study employs classroom observation, teacher diary, questionnaire and interview for data collection. The analysis of the gathered data reveals that the development of the teacher's critical awareness is encouraged by reflective teaching through the classroom investigation and collaboration. It is found that action research, combined with what is known from the research literature, provides a useful and viable approach to making educational decisions at the local level. It is further recognized that change in the teacher's attitudes towards classroom practices has a positive effect on his students' learning. From these findings, it is suggested that one viable way of bridging the gap between theory and practice is to encourage teachers to adopt a research orientation to their own classroom practice, and to engage in research projects. The research findings also suggest that priorities and values of people of a particular cultural context should be considered in setting up language teacher development programs. It is further suggested that efforts should be made to set up a network for dissemination of the research findings in a given context.
I. INTRODUCTION

The literature of language learning and teaching shows that there has been an increasing incorporation of information and communications technology (ICT, henceforth) into language classrooms (Chapelle, 2001; White, 2003). Many different terms are used to describe approaches which employ ICT. In this paper we are focusing on online learning or virtual learning which can be expandable in time and space. Both Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Web-based Instruction (WBI) seem to be applicable to this study. These terms, however, are too broad because they imply the use of technology as a classroom supplementary material. The shift in the learning environment is characterized by 'learner-centeredness', 'self-directed learning', 'cooperative learning', and 'learner autonomy', which distinguish online learning from the traditional learning (Palloff & Pratt, 1999, quoted in Astleitner, 2001; Kassop, 2003). In this new environment, the roles of teachers as well as students are different from those required in the face-to-face language classroom. An impetus to online classroom research comes from such changes in roles teachers and students play in the new environment.

The rationale for the great demand for the classroom research is that the classroom where language learning and teaching take place is crucial to a better understanding of the complex process of learning (Allwright, 1988; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Chaudron, 1988; van Lier, 1988). In terms of teacher effectiveness, a number of earlier studies have been carried out using methods of comparing learning outcomes of CALL (Beatty, 2003). It is observed that the focus of those studies was the comparison of the student achievements between the experimental group and the control group. Although much emphasis has been given to understanding the process of learning and teaching, little research has been done in the process of learning and teaching. The recent survey of the databases supports this. According to the review done in April 2006 for the keywords computer + assisted + language + learning over the dates 2000 to 2006, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) provides 345 journal articles on the CALL. Only one out of the articles is about action research. The result of the search by specifying 'e-learning' as a search keyword and limited to action research is only one out of 285 journal articles.

The increasing need for the research on the online learning classroom, which is created by ICT, also comes from efforts to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Classroom research in online learning has as its primary focus the natural context where teaching and learning takes place, rather than the experimental setting, where variables