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Gaelchat

Can asynchronous learning management systems increase the motivation and confidence of Leaving Certificate students in preparation for their Irish language oral examination?

Eleanor Moloney BA (NUI), H-Dip Ed (NUI)

Supervised by: Dr. Nina Bresnihan

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ABSTRACT

Can asynchronous learning management systems increase motivation and confidence of Leaving Certificate students in preparation for their Irish language oral examination?

Asynchronous learning management systems (ALMS) have been shown to facilitate this learner interaction in an environment that is seen as less threatening than real-time face to face conversations (Gleason & Suvorov, 2012), thus allowing learners develop at their own pace. Anxiety, which has been shown to be a significant barrier to language learning, can be reduced using such a system and through this reduction in anxiety, learner confidence can grow and motivation increase (Gleason & Suvorov, 2012). The aim of this study was to see if a WordPress Blog with asynchronous web-text and voice-thread conversation functions increase the motivation and confidence of Leaving Certificate students in preparation for their Irish oral examination.

To investigate this, an exploratory case study was undertaken with 19 participants. These participants were transition year Irish language students beginning their preparations for the Leaving Certificate Irish oral examination. An ALMS, or artefact made up of two linked WordPress blogs was used to facilitate this learning intervention. These blogs contained a searchable database of relevant supportive notes and chat-rooms which were akin to twitter feeds in appearance. These chat-rooms facilitated the participants' asynchronous Irish conversations which were conducted in the form of web-text and voice-thread conversations. Soundcloud.com was used to record the voice-thread element of conversations as it combines well with the Wordpress.com platform.

Questionnaires examining; the type of motivation participants had with regard to developing their Irish oral language skills, and how participants perceived their oral Irish ability were administered pre and post this learning experience. An analysis of participant interaction both with each other and the artefact, in-class observation and a recorded semi-structured group interview provided data to be analysed, triangulated and compared with the literature and theories which had informed the design of this artefact and learning experience.

An analysis of the data provided through the instruments outlined in the methods chapter concluded that this artefact had successfully increased the participants' confidence in their ability to improve their oral Irish skills. It further highlighted a change in motivation type and increase in the motivation, confidence and feeling of autonomy of these participants to engage in improving their Irish oral language skills and knowledge in preparation for the Leaving Certificate Irish oral examination.