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Eric A. Surface
SWA Consulting Inc.

J. Kemp Ellington
Illinois Institute of Technology



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Models of training effectiveness (TE) attempt to answer two general questions—*for whom* training is more or less effective and *why*. These models typically posit the interaction of trainee characteristics (e.g., cognitive ability), training characteristics (e.g., instructional techniques), and organizational characteristics (e.g., transfer climate) to influence the outcomes of training, such as *changes in learners* (e.g., affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning) and *organizational payoffs* (e.g., transfer) proposed by Kraiger (2002).

Most research related to the impact of training characteristics on outcomes has focused on instructional techniques, learning principles, and the interaction of these features with content. Although important, this focus neglects other major aspects of the learning environment. For example, the influence of the instructor is rarely discussed or even mentioned in TE. Although the education literature provides many anecdotal examples of the importance of teachers to learning (e.g., Cohen, 1981; Doyle, 1977; Levison-Rose & Menges, 1981; Watts &

Bosshardt, 1991), the central role of the instructor in shaping learning and the learning environment has been largely ignored in the training literature (Goldstein, 1993).

Further, many TE studies that investigated the impact of organizational characteristics primarily focus on how the work and organizational environment affects transfer beyond training (Alvarez, Salas, & Garofano, 2004), rather than on learning during training. By concentrating primarily on *organizational context* and its impact on distal outcomes, research focusing on *learning context* (immediate learning environment) and proximal outcomes has been neglected, which limits our understanding of how to optimize individual learning. Although research supports the link between characteristics of the organizational context and organizational payoffs, such as transfer, the link between organizational context and individual learning outcomes has not been supported (Alvarez et al., 2004). In practice, efforts to assess TE are generally cross-sectional and conducted at a single-level of analysis. Thus,

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most organizational influences will be constant across multiple training events, conducted under roughly the same organizational circumstances, such as time, training culture, and HR policies (Johns, 2006). For this reason, the learning context is likely to have a more profound and measurable impact on proximal learning outcomes. The question becomes how to conceptualize learning context and demonstrate its impact.

In his treatment of *omnibus* context, Johns (2006) discusses using a series of questions—*who*, *where*, *when*, and *why*. These questions can be used to define omnibus context and specify the *discrete* context variables that “influence behavior directly or moderate relationships between variables” (p. 393). To conceptualize *learning* context in training, it is important to answer these questions and determine which answers vary and which do not. In a typical training study (i.e., cross-sectional; same organization, objectives, design, physical training location, and organizational timeframe across classes; etc.), the where, when and why questions will not vary substantially and will not impact learning outcomes substantially. However, instructors and students likely vary across classes. Therefore, the “who” heuristic can be used to define omnibus learning context. According to the Johns (2006) paradigm, use of the “who” heuristic to define omnibus learning context would encompass the trainee, the instructor, and trainee cohort. Given the critical role of the instructor in fostering learning and

controlling the social, task, and physical aspects of the discrete learning context, we used instructor assignment to define the omnibus learning context.

Using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to analyze data from two field samples of trainees and instructors from a standardized military training program, results provide rather striking evidence of the impact of omnibus learning context as defined by instructor assignment. Table 1 shows the significant effects of omnibus learning context on a variety of training outcomes, spanning affective and behavioral learning outcomes, as well as transfer intentions and reactions to training. The results demonstrate that trainee’s learning or other training outcomes can be influenced by assignment to a learning context and, therefore, standardized training might not be as standardized as once thought. These findings have broad implications for TE research and practice, especially when training metrics are used to make decisions about resources, policies, or individuals. For example, organizations need to know the extent to which omnibus learning context impacts post-training learning criteria that are used to make high-stakes decisions about trainees. Implications for research and practice will be fully discussed.

In conclusion, this proposal demonstrates the power of using the Johns (2006) paradigm to rethink context and its measurement in a mature research domain. Hopefully, our presentation will help to redefine and reinvigorate context research in TE.

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Table 1. HLM Results by Sample and Post-Training Outcome

Post-Training Outcomes	Outcome Type	Student N (Level 1)	Instructor N (Level 2)	ICC
<i>Sample 1: Archival Study</i>				
Listening Proficiency	Behavioral	2925	148	.1888
Reading Proficiency	Behavioral	2920	148	.3425
Speaking Proficiency	Behavioral	1783	122	.2329
<i>Sample 2: On-going TE Study</i>				
Listening Proficiency	Behavioral	1188	100	.2506
Reading Proficiency	Behavioral	1187	100	.4117
Speaking Proficiency	Behavioral	1284	108	.1448
Job-Specific Self-Efficacy	Affective	976	104	.2139
Learning Self-Efficacy	Affective	994	104	.0482
Language Learning Motivation	Affective	376	73	.1272
Expectancy	Affective	994	104	.0792
Valance	Affective	992	104	.0971
Instrumentality	Affective	378	73	.1015
Overall Satisfaction	Reaction	382	73	.3232
Instructor Effectiveness	Reaction	989	104	.5034
Satisfaction with Instructor	Reaction	383	73	.5731
Motivation to Transfer	Transfer Intention	996	104	.1276
Motivation to Train in the Future	Transfer Intention	994	104	.0558

Note. ICC represents the intra-class correlation, or the proportion of variance in the student training outcomes that resides between instructors. A statistically significant amount of variance ($p < .01$) resided between instructors for all criteria. Significant between-instructor variance remained for all criteria after controlling for student cognitive ability and previous education. The speaking proficiency measure changed from sample 1 to sample 2. Post-training language learning motivation, instrumentality, and the satisfaction measures were added later in the study.

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