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[Developing Global Connections through Computer-Mediated Communication by Myra Shulman](#)

Developing Global Connections through Computer-Mediated Communication

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The author shares her experiences in developing and implementing a collaborative Internet project connecting American University in Washington, D.C., and the Federal University of Parana in Curitiba, Brazil. Topics discussed include identifying an appropriate partner, designing a viable online environment, setting realistic goals, and encouraging interactive and authentic communication among students.

Introduction

Since September of 2000 my colleague Luci Collin from the Federal University of Parana in Curitiba, Brazil, and I have been involved in a collaborative Internet project. This article will discuss the background of the AU-UFPR project, its development and implementation, the problems and solutions, benefits, and suggestions for similar Internet projects. First, let me define Computer-Mediated Communication. According to John December, editor of *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine*, CMC is "the phenomenon of human communication and



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information retrieval on global networks. It is also defined as a human interaction via computer networks and in online environments. CMC is an interdisciplinary mix of communication, technology, education, and journalism. Of course, in education, CMC offers multiple possibilities in terms of distance learning, which is the context for our project.

The project grew out of my participation in spring and summer of 2000 in the U.S./Brazil Fulbright Teacher Exchange, which involved twelve Brazilian and twelve U.S. teachers working in partnerships. This Fulbright program is a direct but non-simultaneous exchange that offers ESL/EFL teachers the opportunity to work in each other's countries for six weeks. The goal of the Fulbright Exchange is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of Brazil and the people of the United States.

Background

Phase one of the Fulbright exchange involved 12 Brazilian teachers working in the United States with 12 American teachers. On May 4, 2000, phase one ended with a debriefing for all 24 teachers in Washington. At this time we were given training by the expert staff at the US/Brazil Learning Technologies Network (LTNet) at the Academy for Education Development in use of Internet communication tools to establish connections between Brazilian and U.S. teachers and students. The LT staff created a VEE (Virtual Exchange Environment) for us that included features such as homepages on the Fulbright Teacher Exchange section of the LTNet web site, and we were encouraged to develop future Internet projects. This was our initial experience with using the Internet to enable and enhance communication and was the impetus for the AU-UFPR project.

Phase two of the exchange took place in July and August of 2000, when I taught at the Federal University of Parana in Curitiba for four weeks. One night in Professor Luci Collin's advanced level North American literature class, fifteen students and I were discussing my students at American University, their academic and social activities, and their lifestyles. (I teach advanced level College Reading and Writing courses at AU.) One student suggested that it would be great if the Brazilian students could communicate through e-mail with my students at American University. The others were enthusiastic about this idea. Professor Luci Collin and I immediately agreed that we should develop a collaborative Internet project, and we asked the students for input in conceptualizing such a project. As a first step, two Brazilian students developed a questionnaire that each student would fill out in order to sign up for the project. Thus, the students were the true originators of this collaboration.

Development

After I returned to Washington, Professor Luci and I discussed through e-mail the parameters for our electronic collaboration and decided participation in the project would be voluntary rather than a course requirement. Our students were at the advanced level and were about the same ages. Our challenge was how best to achieve the integration of classroom learning with online experiences in a learner-centered context. Primarily, we wanted to facilitate interpersonal interaction between our students by encouraging the students to share their ideas about what they were reading and writing. The specific objectives were to

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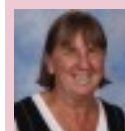
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enhance our students' reading and writing skills, expand their cross-cultural skills, and sharpen their technological abilities. As a general goal, our project would improve our students' English language competence while also improving mutual understanding between people in the United States and people in other countries (which is the Fulbright goal).

Because I had been trained by the staff at the Learning Technologies Network at the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, DC, I turned to them to help set up this online collaboration. They suggested a framework that approximated the format of a course and would allow students to create homepages and teachers to make assignments and monitor the students' work for clarity, quality, and quantity. Thus, the original design for the AU-UFPR project required online courseware. To keep cost low, the free version of Blackboard (www.Blackboard.com) was used. This software program expands the boundaries of a course from the classroom to cyberspace. Using the electronic classroom, teachers can teach part or even all of their courses on the Internet by posting the course syllabus, assignments, and tests on the web site. Teachers and students can communicate asynchronously via e-mail and synchronously in chat rooms. This program demands extensive bandwidth and computer memory in order for participants to use it efficiently.

Implementation: Problems and Solutions

On September 18, I announced the project in my two College Reading and Writing classes and asked interested students to fill out questionnaires in preparation for participation. Sixteen students signed up for the voluntary project. On October 10, I sent an e-mail announcing that the Blackboard environment was ready, so students could enroll in the "course." Most students enrolled themselves, but I helped those who needed support. As the weeks passed, my students in College Reading and Writing were communicating with me and with one another on Blackboard and some had developed homepages, but there was no communication from our Brazilian counterparts. Fortunately, Eric Rusten, from LTNet, was going to Brazil and arranged to meet with Prof Luci and her students to discuss the project. At the meeting at the UFPR, Eric discovered that the Brazilian students were unable to access the Blackboard web site because of insufficient bandwidth at the university in Curitiba. (Bandwidth refers to the speed and volume of information that goes from one computer to another.) Although the students had tried repeatedly to get online, they had failed to do so, with one exception. Thus, Eric and Gini set up a simple listserv, the AU-UFPR Virtual Exchange Discussion List (AU.UFPR@listbot.com), which made it possible for the seventeen U.S. and twelve Brazilian students to communicate through e-mail and a simple chat room. Now the project became viable.

One minor problem arose in the area of cross-cultural communication skills. Although it only involved one Brazilian student, Prof Luci and I realized that students in a global Internet project like ours need a brief introduction to intercultural communication. In December 2000, I had sent an e-mail praising a book I had just read titled *Brazilian Adventure* by the Englishman Peter Fleming (published in 1942). This book describes Fleming's journey into the rivers and jungle of central Brazil. A Brazilian student replied to me that Brazil was not just an uncivilized jungle. Since I had

spent six weeks in Curitiba, Brazil, which I assumed this student knew, I certainly did not think that Brazil was an uncivilized jungle. Thus, I was somewhat surprised by his peculiar comment. Luci then suggested the need for training in cross-cultural communication for students participating in our project. On reflection, I saw that she was right, and the intercultural awareness and competence of the students and teachers should be raised through brief lectures and assigned readings on this topic before beginning the project.

Currently, we are in phase two of the AU-UFPR project, and 23 students in Professor Luci's classes in Anglo-American Studies at the UFPR and 32 students in my College Reading and Writing classes at AU are communicating through e-mail and discussing a variety of topics, with the focus on comparisons of cultural customs and values. This semester we have twice as many students participating, so the AU-UFPR project is expanding, and our students are accomplishing the major goals of this project: to improve their English language skills, to broaden their cross-cultural understanding, and to sharpen their technological abilities. We are still using the listserv, but if funding to federal universities in Brazil is increased, and if the bandwidth is expanded in Curitiba, perhaps we will return to the Blackboard context.

Assignments and Evaluation

In College Reading and Writing, I allocate ten percent of my students' final grade to class participation and attendance. I told students that their participation in the AU-UFPR project would be counted in this ten percent, based on my evaluation of the quality, quantity, and clarity of their email messages and assignments.

In addition to the informal e-mail communication, there were three assignments in phase one:

- an opening task of creating a homepage,
- a prediction of who would win the U.S. presidential election, and
- a final assignment of writing a condensed report on a book or article, including summary, evaluation, and recommendation.

The project this semester, which began in March 2001 because of the school schedule in Brazil, will last for one-half of the semester at American University. Thus, we do not plan to expand the number of assignments. The first assignment was a personal profile done at the LTNet web site. The second was to discuss a cultural value or tradition. The third was to write about cultural differences with North Americans. Future assignments could include writing reports in partnerships, peer review of these documents, publishing these documents on the LTNet web site (using Blogger), reading an article from the Internet and writing a reaction paper on it, and creating group web pages. Long-term goals are to integrate the course content and assignments into the online collaboration so that students would take the course through long-distance learning.

Benefits of the AU-UFPR Exchange

Luci and I are eager to let our students explore alternative pathways in our courses, which is one reason we have set up the AU-UFPR collaboration. Diverse learning techniques are necessary to meet the need of our diverse students. We believe that it is essential to provide students with a variety

of learning opportunities to enhance the chances of successful learning.

Overall Luci and I are satisfied with our initial venture into virtual collaboration through the Internet, and the students have benefited in both tangible and intangible ways. The following are specific benefits that resulted from this project:

- **Adding a new dimension to a traditional course**
Just the small addition of this Internet exchange had an impact on my traditional approach to College Reading and Writing. I was excited to be attempting a new activity, and the students joined in my excitement about our electronic collaboration. We spoke about the progress of the project in nearly every class for a few minutes. Learning and teaching in cyberspace results in a reconsideration and review of classroom teaching methods since the contexts present opposite teaching environments. I have reflected on my face-to-face teaching in light of what I have learned from this brief venture into distance learning.
- **Creating an alternate pathway to learning**
Using the Internet as part of my course created a new way for my students to improve their reading and writing skills. They benefited from this experience in different ways, according to the degree of involvement in the project, but overall their learning was accelerated by this virtual collaboration. Their e-mail discussions offered students the chance for real communication, which enhances language learning. As Zane Berge and Mauri Collins write: "In using emerging computer-based technology as a resource, students are encouraged to explore their own interests and to become active educational workers, with opportunities to solve some authentic problems. . . . Computer-mediated communication (CMC) promotes a type of interaction that is often lacking in the traditional teacher-based classroom. It allows learners the freedom to explore alternative pathways—to find and develop their own style of learning."
- **Accommodating students' different learning styles**
According to Berge and Collins, "In combination with other media, computers can utilize an instructional design that teaches to the multiple intelligences that Gardner (1983) speaks of in *Frames of Mind* (linguistic, logico-mathematical, intrapersonal, spatial, musical, bodily kinesthetic, and interpersonal)." I believe that as teachers we have to try different strategies to find what will help each student, and this project accommodated different learning styles and intelligences. Those students who were quiet and reluctant to participate in class were the most active participants in the Internet project. One student who never spoke up in class created an extensive home page and was the most active participant in the discussion list. Several other students who appeared shy in class were enthusiastically sending e-mail messages. Because Internet communication is only in written form and lacks all visual cues, this context gives anonymity to students, often freeing them from their usual constraints. Therefore, students can express themselves more directly than they otherwise would.

For some of my students, this online experience proved liberating, and it gave me a greater understanding of their competence in the informal writing style of e-mail.

- **Building a community of learners**

The students in my classes and Luci's classes have blended into a community of learners through their involvement in this project, and this community was truly a multi-national group with 16 countries represented. The students seem pleased to be members of this group, as evidenced by their end-of-semester messages. The benefit of forming a group of learners is that learning is more fun when it is social, as students feel they are part of a social process rather than learning in isolation.

- **Supporting American University's goal of global education**

The president of AU has stated that AU is aiming to become a leader in global education. This type of Internet project supports such a goal and certainly will become more common as the university moves in the direction of distance learning through global networks. Although the AU-UFPR project is small, it is a step in the right direction of global education.

The Process of Developing Collaborative Internet Projects

Although every Internet project is different and has unique characteristics, some common parameters exist. The following are the basic steps for establishing successful collaborative Internet projects.

- **Identify an appropriate school, teacher, and students.**

This project grew out of my teaching experiences in the U.S. Brazil Fulbright Teacher Exchange. Thus, I did not have to search for an appropriate partner school. However, it is not difficult to locate schools that would be eager and able to take part in such a collaboration. The easiest way to identify possible partners is through the LTNet web site (www.ltnet.org) if you are interested in schools in Brazil. Other organizations that link schools are IEARN (www.iearn.org) for K through 12 schools and Classroom Connect's Connected Teacher (www.connectedteacher.com/home.asp). Also, you can go to the web site <http://www.teaching.com/iecc/> to find international partners. Finding a teacher with whom you are compatible in terms of teaching philosophy and techniques is equally important. In this case, Luci Collin and I share similar philosophies toward education and employ similar pedagogical techniques. We are in agreement about the goals of this project. We are both teaching advanced reading and writing courses with similar course content, objectives, and assignments. Moreover, I had the advantage of teaching her students, so I could see that her Brazilian students and my ESOL students are at the same advanced level of competence in English.

- **Choose a viable on line environment**
Before embarking on the project, check the technology environment in your partner's school/city/country. It was only after we had configured this project using Blackboard that it became apparent that the technology network in Curitiba was not able to support this heavy software, so the students in Brazil were feeling frustrated as they attempted to participate. The solution of a free listserv was easy to implement although it is less appealing in terms of the options it offers. However, creating a hybrid online environment using a combination of low bandwidth demanding tools can allow you to do the same things as Blackboard.
- **Decide on realistic goals for the project.**
Luci and I decided on the general project goals of improving English competence and cross-cultural understanding because we wanted to begin with a simple design and then, after testing it for one or two semesters, to expand our vision. Specifically, we believed that our students would improve their reading and writing skills in English by designing home pages, sending and receiving e-mail, and doing assignments, would learn about each other's cultures, and would become adept at using technology through participation in the project. We chose to make the project an add-on to the course rather than to integrate it in this first trial.
- **Encourage interactive communication.**
Students are extremely busy with their academic schedules as well as their social lives. Sometimes their good intentions exceed their abilities to carry out their plans to participate in "extra credit" projects. Of course, they are already e-mailing friends around the world. Knowing this, Luci and I drew their attention to the benefits of participation in the AU-UFPR project by stressing that they would enjoy making new friends and exploring the cultural values of another country. Our three assignments in Phase one and Phase two, which were simple, topical, and relevant to their lives, were chosen to spur discussion. Besides expecting students to complete the assignments, we encouraged the students to e-mail one another for any reason and on any topic for the purpose of building global friendship, cooperation, and understanding. We emphasized that students could use an informal style in writing e-mail messages. We also explained that publishing their writing on the Web through Blogger would be quite an accomplishment. Although we have not used the chat room, we plan to in the future because the ideal environment is a combination of synchronous (chat room) and asynchronous (e-mail) tools.
- **Establish a connection with high tech experts.**
It is good to have a source of support for a collaborative Internet venture such as this one. Even in a small-scale project, things can and will go wrong. Being able to turn to experts for help makes all the difference between enjoying the cyberspace adventure and regretting the time and effort that it demands. Thanks to the staff at the LTNet, this experience has been consistently positive for Luci and me.

Conclusion

According to Stephen R. Acker, of the Center for Advanced Study in Telecommunications at Ohio State University, "As telecommunication networks begin to saturate the physical environs, we have entered a period of social transformation." This transformation is also occurring in education, and we are all a part of it. In fact, in light of the globalization of education, long-distance learning projects such as these will become more common and more comprehensive. Luci and I hope to continue with the AU-UFPR project because we believe that a collaborative Internet project has value on many levels, from the pedagogical to the political, assuming access to computers and software exist. Experience is the best teacher, and I have learned a great deal since I first entered into the VEE (Virtual Exchange Environment) almost one year ago at the LTNNet. Based on my experience in this project, I offer the following suggestions.

- Find a school and a teacher that are compatible with you and your school and your school schedule.
- Check the computer environment and the bandwidth limits in both countries if you plan on using Blackboard or a similar heavy software program.
- Consider using a hybrid mix of tools rather than a complex approach like Blackboard.
- Work closely with your partner in the other location to develop realistic expectations, objectives, assignments, and guidelines.
- Give students a short introduction to cross-cultural communication skills.
- Establish a relationship with high tech experts who can support your efforts and solve problems when they arise, which they almost certainly will.

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Other Sources

- The December List: a comprehensive collection of information sources about the Internet and

- computer-mediated communication:
<http://www.december.com/cmc/info/books/html>
- Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication
(<http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/>)

Project Information

- US/Brazil Learning Technologies Network
 - Fast Version – Low Graphics
 - <http://www.ltnet.org/TextOnly/T-English/Home/E-LTNHomeBase.htm>
(However, there is still a frame and Java applet.)
 - Slow Version
 - <http://www.ltnet.org>

The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. VII, No. 6, June 2001
<http://teslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Shulman-CMC.html>

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[Using Microsoft Word to Generate Computerized Tests](#)
by [Frank Tuzi](#)

Using Microsoft Word to Generate Computerized Tests

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Introduction

Language learning requires many hours of practice time. On average 2500 hours is required for a student to achieve an intermediate level of proficiency in a second language (Omaggio, 21) . If a student desires to achieve this level of proficiency in the four years they attend college, they will be required to study approximately two hours everyday. That is fourteen hours a week and sixty-one hours a month.

Since the number of study hours is so extensive, many language programs cannot provide all the hours necessary to reach an intermediate level of English. However, there are other ways to satisfy the study hours these students require. One way to assist in meeting this need for more practice is automation. In other words, teachers can help students practice through computerized practice activities and online testing. There are a number of benefits for computerized materials. One of the most obvious benefits is that students can practice in or out of class. They can practice anytime they desire provided they have computer access. In addition to versatility, students can receive immediate feedback from computerized practice materials since they are computerized. Furthermore, using computerized materials allows students to work at their own pace. Student can be discouraged when the class materials don't address their specific needs. At the same time it is frustrating for a teacher to manage a class containing students with markedly different levels. But computerized practice materials provides the students an opportunity to practice with their specific weaknesses at their own pace.

Although there are many benefits to using computerized materials, there are some possible drawbacks too. Possible drawbacks to computerized materials are cost and time. The better online testing programs like Question Mark Designer are quite expensive (Question Mark Computing, 1997) . Although there are some relatively inexpensive online testing programs, they are not ideal. All of the software packages that I have tested work about the same. The teacher must input all of the materials into the program, question by question. Many seasoned teachers have a plethora of teaching materials saved on their computers; however, these materials cannot be transferred to the testing program. In other words, the teacher must re-input the data that they already input into a word processor. This is time consuming. Wouldn't be nice if there was a program that could create computerized materials directly from a word processor? Another problem with commercially made programs is that the data teachers input is not accessible to other programs. For example, if I create a test in a testing program like Quiz Master(Ez Use, 1997) , I cannot take that test and input into a word processor. So I cannot combine or transfer the data. Transferability is a must with programs, but many testing programs lack this feature.

Some computerized quiz centers are located on the Internet (Mello, 1997) . Although taking quizzes while connected to the Internet is motivating, there are also some drawbacks. Mello mentions four possible problems with Internet based quizzes.

1. The necessity of having an Internet account to be able to access the information.
2. The problems of the Internet itself, that is, the connection is sometimes slow or down.
3. The students have to keep their own score as they check their right and wrong answers against the correct answers given.

4. The students do not know how much time they spent on each quiz, allowing them to better judge their performance.

Using computerized tests off the Internet can eliminate all of these problems. Computerized testing materials can also save time and money and at the same time provide for students individual needs. Furthermore, teachers can lessen their frustration by instructing students to concentrate on strengthening their individual weaknesses via computerized materials.

Having looked at a number of online testing programs, I believe that most of these functions are possible inside the Microsoft (MS) Word environment. In other words, MS Word has all the tools necessary to produce computerized practice and testing materials. In the remainder of this article I will explain some ways to use these tools.

Procedure

The basic tools in creating online materials are *macros* and *forms*. A macro is a series of commands which are performed automatically. For more information about macros, please look at the Alternatives section of this paper. A form is a special gizmo that is inserted into a document. They contain options for a user to select. For example, a teacher has a short reading piece and some multiple choice questions after the reading. One question is

Who is the main character? A) Mickey B) Minney C) Donald D) Pluto

Instead of writing four choices for the students to select or mark on a paper, insert a Drop-down form. When students select this form on the computer screen, they will see a drop down box with all of the options. They select the correct answer and go to the next question. Thus, forms take the place of all major question formats: true false, multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.

With these two tools, teachers can create online materials that students can use to practice.

Creating Online Practice Materials

The first step in making online activities is to select the materials to be converted. As was mentioned earlier, many teachers have practice materials which they made in a word processor. Instead of using them in class or for homework, teachers can convert these materials to online activities which students can use to suit their individual needs. Modern word processors have converters which transfer materials from one word processor to another. If there are no materials which can be converted to MS Word, then teachers will have to spend the time inputting the materials. These teachers will not save time with this system but they will benefit by saving money and retaining versatility. In either case, open MS Word and select the materials to be used.

Next select View from the menu bar. Then select Toolbars, and check Forms toolbar from the pull down menu, and press OK. The Forms Toolbar appears.



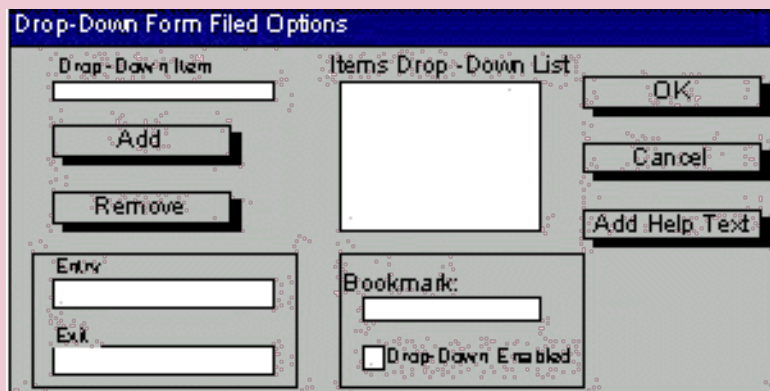
It contains eight buttons. Row one buttons are Textbox, Check Box , Dropdown box, and Form Options. Row two buttons are Table, Frame, Shade and Lock. The text button allows students to fill in the blank, and the dropdown button lets them select from a list of possible answers, i.e. multiple choice. When the online form is completed press the lock button to prevent students from modifying the form.

Now that the materials are loaded and the form toolbar is open, begin inserting forms where students will make options or fill in blanks. For example, in the following sentence students find and fix the errors.

1. A Letters on a table in the kitchen are from a America.

To make this an online form, simply replace the mistakes with dropdown forms.

Select the first mistake (A) and then press the dropdown button. The A is replaced with a gray area. Double click on the gray area and the options form appears.



Add the answer and distracters in the Item drop-down list. When you finish adding the items and distracters, press OK. Follow the same procedure for the second error. When all three bookmarks are finished, the sentence will look like this:

1. A An blank The letters on a an blank the table in the kitchen are from a an blank the America.

For fill in the blank items, select the item to be replaced and insert a Text form. For example, the following sentence contains a blank. Students fill in the blank with the correct word.

1. What are you _____? I am _____ history.

To make this an online form, simply replace the blanks with Text forms. Select the first blank and then press the Text button. The underline is replaced with a gray area. Double click in the gray area and input an indicator word such as "NAME" or "VERB" in all capital letters in the "Default Text" box. In this example type "DO" as the default text. Next press the "add help text" button. Type some instructions on how to

answer this question in the “Type your own” section. For example, type, “Type the correct form of the verb. Spelling is important.”.

Then press OK two times. Do the same thing for the second blank. Insert “STUDY” in the “Default Text” box. When both forms are finished, the sentence will look like this:

1. What are you ? I am the history.

All student needs to do to fill in this “blank” is to click in or tab to the gray area and type the correct word form.

Continue adding forms to replace the items students will select or fill in. After you have completed adding all the forms, lock the form by pressing on the lock button on the “Forms” toolbar. Now that the online document is locked, the text cannot be modified. Select File, Save As from the pull down menu. Change the “Save as Type” to “Template”, give the file a name and press OK.

Students can now access this template whenever they want to by opening MS Word, selecting File, New from the pull-down menu, and selecting the template. The online form will open up and the students can begin to answer the questions. After they finish the online form, they can print it out and hand it in to the teacher for correction, or teachers can create a macro to auto correct the exercises.

Creating an online activity does not take long. A typical practice sheet with 30 question takes about 15 minutes to create. For teachers with more time and interest in providing more assistance, MS Word also allows users to insert help texts into every form. See figure # 2

Precautions

Make sure that the Forms toolbar is not visible when students do these online forms. If it is visible, a student can unlock the form and mess up the text. Also, when using drop-down forms, it is important verify that only one answer can possibly be correct.

Alternatives

For people who are more adventurous, a number of automatic features can be added to these online forms by using macros. As was mentioned earlier, a macro is a series of commands which are performed automatically. A user first makes a macro for a particular set of commands and from then on never has to them again. Instead of pressing all of the commands, they simply activate the macro and the macro performs the commands. For example. When writing a letter, I usually place the date on the right margin, and then begin the letter on the next line from the left margin. Now it is possible for me to perform these tasks by myself. I would need to:

1. Press the Right Justified button on the toolbar
2. Select Insert, Date, Option from the pull down menu
3. Press Enter
4. Press the left justified button on the menu toolbar

But if I make a macro, the macro will do everything for me. To make this macro:

1. Select Tools, Macro from the pull down menu
2. Enter 'Date' in the macro name area
3. Press Record, and Assign the macro to the keyboard
4. Select a short cut key (Like CTRL + Shift + D) and assign
5. Record the Macro and then stop recording

To record the macro, simply perform the task by yourself. Once the Macro is recorded, it can be used over and over again. To activate the macro, select Tools, Macro from the from the pull down menu, select the 'date' macro and run. If you want to use the short cut, press CTRL + Shift + D.

A macro in a practice online form can automate procedures, such as:

- Printing a form
- Checking the form to see how many answers a student got correct
- Inserting sound bytes
- converting the online form to an online test
- Sending the answers of a test to a separate file to record the grade

Using a Macro in an Online Form

Incorporating a macro into an online form is a simple process. The steps are 1) add a form, 2) make a macro, and 3) connect the macro to the form. For example, I want to allow students to automatically print the online form when they finish answering all of the questions.

Now the first step is to add a Check Box form at the bottom of the online form. Move the cursor to the bottom of the document and press the "Check Box" button on the "Forms" toolbar. Beside the checkbox type the word print. I would probably add a line separating the online form for the automation buttons.

After making the Checkbox, begin making a print macro. Select Tools, Macro from the pull down menu. Enter "Print" in the macro name area, and press Record. Don't assign the macro to anything. Now the macro is in the record mode and will record any buttons you push. The Macro Record toolbar also becomes visible. Press the print button on the toolbar, and then press the stop button on Macro Record tool bar. Now the macro is recorded.

The final step is to connect the macro to the check box. Double click on the check box. Click in the "Entry" box. The print macro that was previously created appears in the window. Select "Print", and press OK.

Now that the macro is connected to the check box, lock the online form and save it. When a student opens this practice sheet, they can automatically print it. They don't have to understand how to operate MS Word because the macro does it automatically.

To check the answers requires a macro that is created and not recorded, and creating a macro requires some knowledge of Word Basic or Visual Basic.

There is a macro available that allows teachers to add a check answers macro and a print macro to any practice document. There is also a macro to create CLOZE exercises and C Tests. The [download](http://www.root.or.jp/fltuzi/resource.htm) location is <http://www.root.or.jp/fltuzi/resource.htm>.

Conclusion

Using MS Word is a fast, easy and inexpensive way to create online practice materials and tests. The process of making online materials includes: selecting materials to use in an online form, opening the forms toolbar, replacing text with either text forms or drop-down forms, locking the online form and saving it as a new template. For schools who already have a copy of MS Word, there is no cost. Using the above outlined procedures, schools can have an almost unlimited amount of practice materials for students to use and learn from at their own pace and during their own free time.

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[CALL is not a Hammer and not Every Teaching Problem is a Nail! by Judy F.Chen](#)

CALL is not a Hammer and not Every Teaching Problem is a Nail!

Changing Expectations of Computers in the Classroom

Judy F. Chen

CAI and CALL Application in Taiwan

Past

When looking at CAI (Computer Assisted Instruction) and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in Taiwan (R.O.C.), it is clear that application of these technologies, in the classroom, is in its embryonic stage. Through a combination of factors, computers have generally not entered the R.O.C. language scene. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- General lack of computerization of schools in the R.O.C.

An observer outside of Taiwan would be surprised that one of the world's technology manufacturing centers actually has been slow to adopt computers in its schools. This situation, however, is undergoing change as the R.O.C. Ministry of Education places more emphasis on computer use in educational institutions.

- Lack of access to mainframes and minis, on which many CAI and CALL software was originally developed

Computer departments have traditionally limited access of their mainframes and minis to computer majors. Since PCs have existed only since the early 1980s, most software, and especially powerful software often needed in CAI, has been developed on mainframe computers. This has changed, however, as PCs have taken over as the workhorses of the computer revolution and computer departments quickly upgraded their machines, thus leaving many "outdated," yet still useful, 8086, 80286 and 80386 computers with no users. On the software side, 80386 and 80486 computers, combined with modern programming technologies (Sarna & Febish, 1993) can match and even surpass the computing power of many mainframes in existence only a decade earlier.

- Needed technology only recently commercialized, i.e., powerful computer packages: 80486 CPUs, sound cards and CD-ROMs

The rapidly dropping prices of computers has allowed English departments to gain access to used machines as well as newer 80486 machines. Economies of scale in the manufacturing and distribution of "multimedia" compatible computers now means that for under NT\$40,000 (approximately US\$1,500) an individual system can be purchased that runs the most up-to-date software capable of producing moving graphics, video and good quality sound.

- Expenditures of time and money for non-computer based "language labs" that are not perceived as successful teaching tools

The factors cited above are of a structural nature and have not been influenced by language teachers. One last factor I will cite is directly related to language teachers and the previous "technology solution" for language learners, i.e., the audiolingual methods, from the late fifties and early sixties, as applied in the language lab. Although many of the

motivating theories have since been supplanted, the language labs go on. Schools nearly everywhere around the world automatically include labs as part of any English program (Strei, 1979).

It is likely that negative experiences with language labs has led teachers to be skeptical of new technologies in the classroom. Many Taiwan schools have installed language lab equipment that allows a class of students to listen to recorded conversations through headphones, equipped with microphones, while a teacher can send instructions, listen into and monitor students through a central control panel.

Often, the engineers who installed such equipment did not understand all the features and installation requirements and certainly had little grasp of the pedagogical applications. The result was that at many locations, these language labs simply have become glorified, and expensive, tape players. The equipment actually served to separate the students from the teacher and encouraged less motivated students to daydream through the class period. Such experience is not unique to Taiwan, nor is it new, but may be endemic to language labs (Kirpal 1979). Teachers are often placed in these labs with no training, not even a manual on the lab's features and use, while a class of fifty students wait for the teacher to assimilate. With teachers struggling to find use of the technology they already have, it is unrealistic to expect them to quickly swallow another "technology solution" pill.

Present

In the past decade, numerous academics have examined the application of CAI in Taiwan classrooms. From the very start, teachers have realized that computers have enormous potential. Of special interest is the realization that CAI may be especially useful in the Taiwan situation where writing students are often at a low level of skill attainment and class size is large (Chen, 1988).

Many teachers, domestic and foreign have observed that students generally have a positive attitude toward technology in the classroom. Studies have consistently shown that students have positive attitudes about computer technology being used in the classroom and that such technology does have a positive impact (Warden, 1995; Chen, 1988; Nash et al., 1989; Brady, 1990; Herrmann, 1987; Johnson, 1988; Phinney & Mathis, 1988).

However, such attitudes and results may simply reflect the "normal" outlook of most people who live in the Computer Age. Academics such as Pennington (1991) and Thiesmeyer (1989) warn of rushing into CALL without solid evidence of its benefits. Such caution is justified since all of the cultural signals being sent every day, support the belief that technology is good, and that specifically computers are helpful in nearly every human endeavor. Even expressing the slightest doubts about the usefulness of computers is likely to result in one being labeled as a Luddite. Classroom research of CAI must avoid such dogmatism and not make any apriori conclusions.

Future

Clearly, adoption of CAI and CALL approaches will not, and should not, spread until measurable benefits can be seen not only for students but also for teachers. More research into actual results of CAI application results must be performed.

All too often, CAI is becoming confused with multimedia and the Information Superhighway. These are useful tools, but are they germane to CAI? I would assert that they are not CAI simply when they are used in the classroom. Although many apriori conclusions can be reached about their effectiveness, it is only after careful research into results that a tool can be justified as having CAI application.

Researchers must make a determination about the pedagogical outcomes of new, and old, CAI software. Some points important to any CAI investigation include:

Avoiding Hawthorne effects that are common in this area

It is quite obvious to any group of students that they are being observed when said group is allowed access to computer equipment and software while others are not. Even the use of class time to introduce computer language labs and/or software rips away the mask of the researcher. Rather than creating research situations that invite the Hawthorne effect, researchers should look into applying some type of technology to all groups being studied. Some groups are actually using the teaching technology in question, while others are receiving a placebo.

Not questioning attitudes about technology

Direct questioning of subjects about the technology in question is certain to illicit inaccurate and irrelevant information. First of all, societal pressures encourage positive responses towards technology. Anyone, especially young people, who does not like technology often is of the opinion that such an attitude is a reflection of his/her own deficiencies. Secondly, direct attitude questions about the material being tested is simply not accurate. If we were to show Mickey Mouse cartoons to one group of students and then had a different group of students read Shakespeare, the results from a direct question about material is obvious. Although details about comprehensible input could be argued ad infinitum, language researchers must understand that it is results that matter and not intermediate attitudes, which are shifting and vacillating at best.

Not judging the software interface but looking for real language improvement results

Somewhat related to the above point, this problem stems from interfaces that today can include animation, actual video clips, dialogue and music. The multimedia revolution has arrived and anyone who looks at some well produced, slick multimedia titles cannot help but to be impressed. However, it is not uncommon that the newness factor wears off quickly and a multimedia title that looked so slick the first few viewings is later found to be empty of real content. The computer screen that shows moving colorful pictures is interesting to the teacher who buys the title, but we must consider the students who will use the software many times over in their attempts to improve their language skills. Will such moving pictures and sound look good after the tenth time around, or will they simply become an annoyance? Content must be paramount in our investigations.

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English Teachers' Barriers to the Use of Computer-assisted Language Learning

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Computers have been used for language teaching ever since the 1960's. This 40-year period can be divided into three main stages: behaviorist CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Each stage corresponds to a certain level of technology and certain pedagogical theories. The reasons for using Computer-assisted Language Learning include: (a) experiential learning, (b) motivation, (c) enhance student achievement, (d) authentic materials for study, (e) greater interaction, (f) individualization, (g) independence from a single source of information, and (h) global understanding. The barriers inhibiting the practice of Computer-assisted Language Learning can be classified in the following common categories: (a) financial barriers, (b) availability of computer hardware and software, (c) technical and theoretical knowledge, and (d) acceptance of the technology.

Introduction

In the last few years the number of teachers using Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) has increased markedly and numerous articles have been written about the role of technology in education in the 21st century. Although the potential of the Internet for educational use has not been fully explored yet and the average school still makes limited use of computers, it is obvious that we have entered a new information age in which the links between technology and TEFL have already been established.

In the early 90's education started being affected by the introduction of word processors in schools, colleges and universities. This mainly had to do with written assignments. The development of the Internet brought about a revolution in the teachers' perspective, as the teaching tools offered through the Internet were gradually becoming more reliable. Nowadays, the Internet is gaining immense popularity in foreign language teaching and more and more educators and learners are embracing it.

The History of CALL

Computers have been used for language teaching ever since the 1960's. According to Warschauer & Healey (1998), this 40-year period can be divided into three main stages: behaviorist CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Each stage corresponds to a certain level of technology and certain pedagogical theories.

Behaviorist CALL

In the 1960's and 1970's the first form of computer-assisted Language Learning featured repetitive language drills, the so-called drill-and-practice method. It was based on the behaviorist learning model and as such the computer was viewed as little more than a mechanical tutor that never grew tired. Behaviorist CALL was first designed and implemented in the era of the mainframe and the best-known tutorial system, PLATO, ran on its own special hardware. It was mainly used for extensive drills, explicit grammar instruction, and translation tests (Ahmad, et al., 1985).

Communicative CALL

Communicative CALL emerged in the 1970's and 1980's as a reaction to the behaviorist approach to language learning. Proponents of communicative CALL rejected behaviorist approaches at both the theoretical and pedagogical level. They stressed that CALL should focus more on using forms rather than on the forms themselves. Grammar should be taught implicitly and students should be encouraged to generate original utterances instead of manipulating prefabricated forms (Jones & Fortescue, 1987; Philips, 1987). This form of computer-based instruction corresponded to cognitive theories which recognized that learning was a creative process of discovery, expression, and development. The mainframe was replaced by personal computers that allowed greater possibilities for individual work. Popular CALL software in this era included text reconstruction programmers and simulations.

Integrative CALL

The last stage of computer-assisted Language Learning is integrative CALL. Communicative CALL was criticized for using the computer in an ad hoc and disconnected fashion and using the computer made 'a greater contribution to marginal rather than central elements' of language learning (Kenning & Kenning, 1990: 90). Teachers have moved away from a cognitive view of communicative language teaching to a socio-cognitive view that emphasizes real language use in a meaningful, authentic context. Integrative CALL seeks both to integrate the various skills of language learning (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) and to integrate technology more fully into language teaching (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). To this end the multimedia-networked computer provides a range of informational, communicative, and publishing tools that are potentially available to every student.

Why Use CALL?

Research and practice suggest that, appropriately implemented, network-based technology can contribute significantly to:

Experiential Learning

The World Wide Web makes it possible for students to tackle a huge amount of human experience. In such a way, they can learn by doing things themselves. They become the creators not just the receivers of knowledge. As the way information is presented is not linear, users develop thinking skills and choose what to explore.

Motivation

Computers are most popular among students either because they are associated with fun and games or because they are considered to be fashionable. Student motivation is therefore increased, especially whenever a variety of activities are offered, which make them feel more independent.

Enhanced Student Achievement

Network-based instruction can help pupils strengthen their linguistic skills by positively affecting their learning attitude and by helping them build self-instruction strategies and promote their self-confidence.

Authentic Materials for Study

All students can use various resources of authentic reading materials either at school or from their home. Those materials can be accessed 24 hours a day at a relatively low cost.

Greater Interaction

Random access to Web pages breaks the linear flow of instruction. By sending E-mail and joining newsgroups, EFL students can communicate with people they have never met. They can also interact with their own classmates. Furthermore, some Internet activities give students positive and negative feedback by automatically correcting their on-line exercises.

Individualization

Shy or inhibited students can be greatly benefited by individualized, student-centered collaborative learning. High fliers can also realize their full potential without preventing their peers from working at their own pace.

Independence from a Single Source of Information

Although students can still use their books, they are given the chance to escape from canned knowledge and discover thousands of information sources. As a result, their education fulfils the need for interdisciplinary learning in a multicultural world.

Global Understanding

A foreign language is studied in a cultural context. In a world where the use of the Internet becomes more and more widespread, an English Language teacher's duty is to facilitate students' access to the web and make them feel citizens of a global classroom, practicing communication on a global level.

What Can We Do With CALL?

There is a wide range of on-line applications which are already available for use in the foreign language class. These include dictionaries and encyclopedias, links for teachers, chat-rooms, pronunciation tutors, grammar and vocabulary quizzes, games and puzzles, literary extracts. The World Wide Web (WWW) is a virtual library of information that can be accessed by any user around the clock. If someone wants to read or listen to the news, for example, there are a number of sources offering the latest news either printed or recorded. The most important newspapers and magazines in the world are available on-line and the same is the case with radio and

TV channels.

Another example is communicating with electronic pen friends, something that most students would enjoy. Teachers should explain how it all works and help students find their keypals. Two EFL classes from different countries can arrange to send E-mail regularly to one another. This can be done quite easily thanks to the web sites providing lists of students looking for communication. It is also possible for two or more students to join a chat-room and talk on-line through E-mail. .

Another network-based EFL activity could be project writing. By working for a project a pupil can construct knowledge rather than only receive it. Students can work on their own, in groups of two or in larger teams, in order to write an assignment, the size of which may vary according to the objectives set by the instructor. A variety of sources can be used besides the Internet such as school libraries, encyclopedias, reference books etc. The Internet itself can provide a lot of food for thought. The final outcome of their research can be typed using a word processor. A word processor can be used in writing compositions, in preparing a class newsletter or in producing a school home page. In such a Web page students can publish their project work so that it can reach a wider audience. That makes them feel more responsible for the final product and consequently makes them work more laboriously.

The Internet and the rise of computer-mediated communication in particular have reshaped the uses of computers for language learning. The recent shift to global information-based economies means that students will need to learn how to deal with large amounts of information and have to be able to communicate across languages and cultures. At the same time, the role of the teacher has changed as well. Teachers are not the only source of information any more, but act as facilitators so that students can actively interpret and organize the information they are given, fitting it into prior knowledge (Dole, et al., 1991). Students have become active participants in learning and are encouraged to be explorers and creators of language rather than passive recipients of it (Brown, 1991). Integrative CALL stresses these issues and additionally lets learners of a language communicate inexpensively with other learners or native speakers. As such, it combines information processing, communication, use of authentic language, and learner autonomy, all of which are of major importance in current language learning theories.

Teachers' Barriers to the Use of Computer-assisted Language Learning

The barriers inhibiting the practice of Computer-assisted Language Learning can be classified in the following common categories (a) financial barriers, (b) availability of computer hardware and software, (c) technical and theoretical knowledge, and (d) acceptance of the technology.

Financial Barriers

Financial barriers are mentioned most frequently in the literature by language education practitioners. They include the cost of hardware, software, maintenance (particular of the most advanced equipment), and extend to some staff development. Froke (1994b) said, "concerning the money, the challenge was unique because of the nature of the

technology.” Existing universities policies and procedures for budgeting and accounting were well advanced for classroom instruction. The costs of media were accounted for in the university as a part of the cost of instruction. Though the initial investment in hardware is high, inhibiting institutions’ introduction of advance technologies; but Hooper (1995) recommends that the cost of computers will be so low that they will be available in most schools and homes in the future.

Lewis et al. (1994) indicate three conditions under which Computer-assisted Learning and other technologies can be cost-effectiveness: Computer-assisted Learning costs the same as conventional instruction but ends up with producing higher achievement in the same amount of instructional time, it results in students achieving the same level but in less time. These authors indicate that in examples where costs of using technologies in education are calculated, they are usually understand because the value of factors, such as faculty time and cost of equipment utilization, is ignored (McClelland, 1996).

Herschbach (1994) argues firmly that new technologies are add-on expenses and will not, in many cases, lower the cost of providing educational services. He stated that that the new technologies probably will not replace the teachers, but will supplement their efforts, as has been the pattern with other technologies. The technologies will not decrease educational costs or increase teacher productivity as currently used. Low usage causes the cost barrier. Computers, interactive instruction TV, and other devices are used very few hours of the day, week, or month. Either the number of learners or the amount of time learners apply the technology must be increased substantially to approach the concept of cost-effectiveness. There are other more quick and less expensive ways of reducing costs, no matter how inexpensive the technology being used (Kincaid, McEachron, & McKinney, 1994).

Availability of Computer Hardware and Software

The most significant aspects of computer are hardware and software. Availability of high quality software is the most pressing challenge in applying the new technologies in education (Herschbach, 1994; Miller, 1997; Office of Technology Assessment, 1995; Noreburg & Lundblad, 1997). Underlying this problem is a lack of knowledge of what elements in software will promote different kinds of learning. There are few educators skilled in designing it because software development is costly and time-consuming (McClelland, 1996).

McClelland (1996) indicated having sufficient hardware in locations where learners have access to it problematic and is, of course, partly a financial problem. Computer hardware and software compatibility goes on to be a significant problem. Choosing hardware is difficult because of the many choices of systems to be used in delivering education, the delivery of equipment, and the rapid changes in technology.

Technical and Theoretical Knowledge

A lack of technical and theoretical knowledge is another barrier to the use of Computer-assisted Language Learning technology. Not only is there a shortage of knowledge about developing software to promote learning, as shown above, but many instructors do not understand how to use the new

technologies. Furthermore, little is known about integrating these new means of learning into an overall plan. In the communication between McClelland and C. Dede (1995), Dede indicated the more powerful technologies, such as artificial intelligence in computers, might promote learning of higher-order cognitive skills that are difficult to access with today's evaluation procedures and, therefore, the resulting pedagogical gains may be under-valued. Improper use of technologies can affect both the teacher and learner negatively (Office of Technical Assessment, 1995).

Acceptance of Technologies

We live in a time change. Gelatt (1995) stated that change itself has changed. Change has become so rapid, so turbulent, and so unpredictable that is now called "white water" change (p.10). Murphy & Terry (1998a) indicated the current of change move so quickly that they destroy what was considered the norm in the past, and by doing so, create new opportunities. But, there is a natural tendency for organizations to resist change. Wrong conceptions about the use of technology limit innovation and threaten teachers' job and security (Zuber-Skerritt, 1994). Instructors are tend not to use technologies that require substantially more preparation time, and it is tough to provide instructors and learners access to technologies that are easy to use (Herschbach, 1994).

Engaging in Computer-assisted Language Learning is a continuing challenge that requires time and commitment. As we approach the 21st century, we realize that technology as such is not the answer to all our problems. What really matters is how we use technology. Computers can/will never substitute teachers but they offer new opportunities for better language practice. They may actually make the process of language learning significantly richer and play a key role in the reform of a country's educational system. The next generation of students will feel a lot more confident with information technology than we do. As a result, they will also be able to use the Internet to communicate more effectively, practice language skills more thoroughly and solve language learning problems more easily.

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[Advantages and Disadvantages of ESL Course Books by Peter Tze-Ming Chou](#)

Advantages and Disadvantages of ESL Course Books

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This article examines the advantages and disadvantages of ESL course books and what English teachers can do to improve their lessons. The use of course books in the ESL classroom is very common because the course books have the advantages of being visually appealing, easy for the teacher to prepare, and the activities fits well into the timetable. However, from the researcher's own teaching experience, there are several problems and issues with the course books such as uninteresting topics, repetitive activities, and not enough language exposure. This in terms may affect the student's learning attitude and motivation. It was suggested that if ESL course books are to be used, it is necessary for the teacher to prepare and develop other activities, especially extensive reading to keep the classroom atmosphere more interesting and the students more interested in what they are learning.

Introduction

There are many different kinds of English as a Second Language (ESL) course books that are designed for students of all levels and ages. Therefore, the process of choosing the right course book for use in the classroom, especially at the college level, is a daunting task. In addition, what we choose for our classrooms often shapes the syllabi, and sometimes even the entire language program (Angell, DuBravac and Gonglewski, 2008; Byrnes, 1988). There are many reasons why English teachers choose to use ESL course books in the classroom. Sometimes it is based on our impressions and expectations of what teaching materials should look like. Other reasons might be that the course books are visually appealing, easy for the teacher to prepare, and the activities fits well into the timetable (Angell et al., 2008). However, all course books should be chosen based on its educational values and whether or not it meets the program objectives. Most importantly, students should learn something beyond just simple practices of ABC's. According to Cheung and Wong (2002), the major premise of an academic curriculum should aim at developing students' intellectual abilities in subject areas that are most worthy of study. This means that the curriculum should provide intrinsically rewarding experiences for the students while developing their affective and cognitive domain. Schwartz (2006) mentioned that a good curriculum is not only designed for the students, it is also designed for the teachers as well. In other words, a good curriculum not only educates the student, but teachers can also teach something of value to the students. Therefore, what could teachers do to improve their courses when they are restricted by the ESL course book assigned to them by the administration?

Advantages of Course books

From the school administration and some teacher's point of view, there are several advantages for basing the curriculum on a series of ESL course books. First, the course books have a clearly identified set of achievement objectives which include what the learners are expected to be able to do and what to expect next. These ready-made syllabi contain carefully planned and balanced selection of language content that can be easily followed by teachers and students (Kayapinar, 2009). Second, when the teachers are teaching each unit in the course books, there is a consistency in the topics and genres in the four skills area (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This allows for greater autonomy in the learning process. In addition, many inexperienced teachers may find ESL course books to be useful and practical because the ready-made activities and lessons are easy for the teacher to prepare. In many of the ESL course books, the designers even have prepared achievement tests for each units of study and a teacher's manual to guide the teacher in their instruction. Finally, ESL course books are the cheapest and most convenient ways of providing learning materials to each student (Kayapinar, 2009). All of these reasons make using course books a very popular choice in the English learning curriculum.

Potential Problems

From the researcher's own experiences, there are a number of issues to consider when using ESL course books. First, most course books contain a lot of activities where students do "questions and answers". After a few lessons, many students may find the learning process boring and uninteresting. In addition, the reading selections in the ESL course books are often quite short and they often fail to present appropriate

and realistic language models as well as fostering cultural understanding (Kayapinar, 2009). The lack of challenging reading materials could also slow the students' language development creating a plateau effect.

The second issue that teachers should consider is student motivation. Most college students expect their English courses to be something different from their high school English classes. So when we give them course books that are similarly designed as their past learning materials, the students may quickly lose their interest and motivation to study. This is because the similarities in the ESL course books may cause the students to feel bored due to the "sameness" or "repetitiveness" of the lessons and activities. This is a major problem because the English courses are designed around using a single course book for the whole academic year. According to Harmer (2007), it may be relatively easy for students to be extrinsically motivated; however, the challenge is sustaining that motivation. Although motivation can be sustained through varied class activities, if the content of the course book is uninteresting and repetitive, then sustaining the motivation will be problematic for the teacher no matter how hard they try.

Finally, although most ESL course books are well organized with many different kinds of activities, however, they do not provide enough details in other aspects of language study. A good example would be in the study of grammar. The grammar section in each unit of the course book usually does not provide enough explanation or practice questions. Relying on the course book to provide the students with adequate knowledge of grammar would not be enough, especially when a teacher spends between two to three weeks to cover a single unit of the course book. This means that in a typical semester, students only receive between four to six different types of grammar instruction, a number far behind from what they could have been studying if the students had a grammar textbook where they can study a different unit every week with lots of practice activities.

Possible Solutions

The following suggestions are proposed to make any English program that relies on ESL course books more effective. First, if an ESL course book is to be used, outside reading materials will need to be added to the curriculum. This would greatly increase and develop the student's language ability. In language learning, reading is considered one of the most important lessons for the learner. Researches in extensive reading have shown many beneficial effects on students. Nation (2001) claimed that when learners read, they not only learn new words, but they can also develop their syntactic knowledge as well as general knowledge of the world. Other recent studies have also shown that students who participated in extensive reading increased gains in the areas of vocabulary knowledge (Hirsch, 2003; Horst, 2005) as well as in reading comprehension and reading fluency (Hirsch, 2003; Iwahori, 2008; Sheu, 2003). One possible explanation for the increase is that students acquire new words incidentally through reading thousands and thousands of words every day. Learning vocabulary this way may be considered more effective than rote memorization because through reading interesting texts, students learn new vocabulary and review old ones. By increasing the amount of reading, especially reading for pleasure, it can increase both vocabulary knowledge and reading rate, both of which are an important part of reading comprehension (Martin- Chang

and Gould, 2008).

Outside reading materials could also enhance student motivation especially if they find the reading passages from the course book too easy or uninteresting. After all, the students who are using these ESL course books are young adults and they should be gaining knowledge from their readings, not just coming to class to practice English. With the use of outside reading materials, the teacher can also design many different activities for the classroom. For example, if the class is reading a short story, the teacher can use class discussions as a form of conversation practice. Teachers can also have students do different kinds of presentations based on their readings. These activities would be more challenging for the students than the question and answer activities found in most ESL course books.

Another suggestion is to add grammar studies to the language program. A grammar textbook contains detailed explanation of grammar rules and offers more practice questions than those found in a typical course book. The teacher can plan and devote part of the class time each week to teaching new grammar rules. This would not only help with student's writing, but also in other areas as well such as speaking. The sooner we can get our students to use more correct English, the more confidence they will have. All of the activities above would make the classroom more interesting in which the students are more involved with the activities rather than just listening to the teacher and doing questions and answers from the course book.

Conclusion

Using course books has its share of benefits and advantages such as having a well organized content with a consistency in the topics and genres for the four skill area (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Teachers who adopt a course book may also find it easier to teach since most of the preparation, including the types of activities, audios and in some cases, achievement tests, are already done by the publisher. This would be a great help to those inexperienced teachers who are just getting started into teaching. However, nothing in the world is perfect and teachers need to somehow solve the issues and problems that may come with ESL course books. These issues and problems may include finding ways to motivate students and teaching students academic skills not found in the course books. In this sense, the teacher's job is not as easy as it seems. Many hours of planning and developing other activities are still required, but these planning and development will benefit both the student and the teacher by making the classroom activities more fun, more interesting, and result in more learning.

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[A Teacher Friendly Process for Evaluating and Selecting ESL/EFL Coursebooks by Jon Shave](#)

A Teacher Friendly Process for Evaluating and Selecting ESL/EFL Coursebooks

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This article demonstrates a simple and effective coursebook evaluation process suitable for all teaching professionals regardless of workload or experience. Existing evaluation methods (Cunningsworth, 1995; McGrath 2002 etc) often require considerable time and experience for effective use. An authentic example is used to model this simple and effective analysis process which examines the teaching situation and coursebook

characteristics in order to enable appropriate selection and effective use of materials.

Introduction

This article is intended to help language teachers and departmental heads make suitable decisions when choosing a coursebook. As teachers, we know that selection of a suitable coursebook is vital, as coursebooks can provide a structure from which the process of language learning can begin (O'Neill, 1982: 110-111). A logical decision-making process rather than purely instinctive selection ensures a reliable decision is made without entering into impractical and lengthy evaluation research which may not be possible for many teachers due to time constraints or lack of experience, as well as the number of variables involved (Cunningsworth, 1995: 5).

In this article, an efficient evaluation process is demonstrated in order to provide an example which may be helpful to other teaching professionals. The process can be used to evaluate several coursebooks comparatively (as in this example) for selection purposes or with individual coursebooks in order to maximize effective teaching and learning.

The first step in the selection process involves analyzing (or reanalyzing) the situation in which the coursebooks will be used, and comparing this information with the intended teaching/learning situation as stated by the publishers. The next stage analyzes the methodology and syllabus of the materials. Next, using selected comparable units, the main teaching points are identified and strengths and weaknesses evaluated. A single selected exercise can then be trialled with the learners to gain further insight.

Step 1: Who Will Use the Coursebook? In What Situation?

As materials can only be meaningfully evaluated in relation to their intended teaching situation (Richards, 2001: 256), the first stage of the evaluation involves assessing (or reassessing) the unique situation in which the materials will be used. In order to gather information on the specific learning context, a comprehensive, yet lengthy, published questionnaire which required a high level of theoretical knowledge (Cunningsworth, 1995: 6) was adapted and condensed into two equally important and codependent sets of questions.

The Learning/Teaching Situation

What are the overall aims of the English programme? What are the specific objectives for this course? Is there a detailed syllabus or will the coursebook provide the syllabus? How long is the course? How many learners are there? What resources are available in the class? Will progress be measured? How?

The Learners and Teacher

How old are the learners and what is their level of English? Are they all the same age and level? What type of language learning experience, if any, do they have? What do they expect from the classes? How do they like to learn? Are they motivated? What is their motivation? What are their interests and values? What is the role, experience and teaching style of the teacher? Are they free to adapt materials?

All teaching/learning situations are unique (McGrath, 2002: 10) and the above questions provide data relevant to the specific investigation in question (ibid. 25-27). No pre-prepared set of questions will be completely suited to a real classroom (Cunningsworth, 1996: 5). For this reason, questions can and should be revised to meet the needs of the specific evaluation in order to best identify the actual teaching/learning situation.

In the example situation the following characteristics were identified:

- Adult learners aged 50+
- Intermediate to Upper Intermediate level.
- Learning English for social personal motivation rather than academic or business reasons.
- Learners tend towards Authority Oriented (they prefer the teacher to explain things) and Concrete Learning (they prefer to play games and work in pairs) styles (Nunan, 1999: 57).
- Group 11 students, 100 minutes per week
- Experienced teacher. Free to adapt materials.

Following analysis of the actual learning situation, a comparison can be made with the intended learner/teaching situation as stated by the publishers. This is often found in the introduction of the teacher's book or in the coursebook. A summary of the intended learner/teaching situations as stated by the publishers in the example materials is shown below:

Coursebook Y (the old/existing coursebook)

- For use by adults and young adults
- Provides fun user-centred lessons
- Prepares learners to begin FCE course

Coursebook X (the new/replacement coursebook)

- For use by adults and young adults
- Uses a communicative approach to teaching
- Is intended to cover B2 level of the Common European Framework

In our example we see that the coursebooks are suitable in terms of learner age, level and desire for a communicative learning situation. Points of divergence include; preparation for FCE which is not the course aim, and an absence of reference to the social aspect of the learning situation. Following the first stage of our evaluation we can see that the intended learning situation in both coursebooks is compatible with the actual situation, and we are already starting to get an idea of what areas of the coursebook might need to be adapted.

Step 2: Analysis of the Methodology and Syllabus

After identifying the learning situation, we can begin to think about what type of methodology might be suitable. Inexperienced teachers may lack extensive knowledge of methodological theory but can still consider what type of teaching is appropriate. Possibilities include a traditional teacher centred methodology, a communicative approach or task based learning. Whether a structural, functional or other type of syllabus is suitable can also be considered. The most appropriate methodology and syllabus will depend on the group.

A starting point for identification of methodology might be claims made in the teacher's book. The teacher can then look in the coursebook in an attempt to verify these claims (Cunningsworth, 1995: 97-108). In the case of the example, the coursebooks both claimed to use a communicative approach, which, although it cannot be clearly defined as a unified methodology, can be characterized by authenticity, real world simulation and meaningful tasks (Brown, 2001: 39). Analysis showed that not only was language usage taught, but was also combined with varying degrees of opportunity for use, which does imply perspectives based on communicative methodology (Larsen-Freeman, 1986: 123). However, the unit structures observed in both coursebooks implied a more traditional methodology.

In order to analyse the syllabus, a simple list of the sequencing of language items or uses can be made. Both coursebooks devoted each unit to the presentation of one or (a small selection) of grammatical structures, which were sequenced according to complexity, learnability and usefulness, which implies a traditional structural influence to syllabus design (Cunningsworth, 1995: 55). The sequencing was arranged reflecting a common 'simple to complex' pattern (Richards: 2001, 150). The courses covered structures which upper intermediate level students would be familiar with, such as past simple and continuous, and progressed to less frequently occurring, more complex or more difficult to learn structures. This sequencing of units determined by linguistic complexity is a characteristic typically associated with an Audio-Lingual methodology (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 67).

The second step has revealed through observation that Coursebook X and Coursebook Y tend towards more traditional types of methodology and syllabi. Judgment can now begin to be made as to whether this is appropriate for the group.

Step 3: A Closer Look at Individual Units

Having established the needs of the learners and the methodologies of the coursebooks, open and unbiased closer analysis of the materials is now beneficial. In this stage, single units are evaluated, as how a unit presents language can indicate the strengths and weaknesses of coursebooks. However, remember that one unit may not reflect the whole coursebook (Cunningsworth, 1995: 2). Following analysis the teacher can again reflect upon which coursebook seems most appropriate.

In the case of this example, comparable units presenting the narrative tenses were selected, as an accurate and increasingly fluent use of the narrative tenses represents the transition from Threshold to Independent user, (Association of Language Teachers in Europe, 2002: 6-10). The selection of unit depends on the unique situation and should be decided by the evaluating teacher.

In the Contents section of the students' book, Coursebook Y lists the following areas of language covered in five student book pages, plus two extra pages for vocabulary and writing, two additional photocopiable activities and three workbook pages.

Coursebook Y Main Teaching Points

- Narrative tenses and past perfect continuous
- Common verbs which are often confused

- Pronunciation of regular and irregular past tenses
- Telling an anecdote
- Reading mini sagas and authentic materials in the form of newspaper articles
- Writing a story (short and long)

Coursebook X Main Teaching Points

- Narrative tenses and past perfect continuous
- Phrasal verbs
- Reading and listening to urban myths
- Telling stories in the form of urban myths

In summary, the main teaching points of the units are grammatically similar although in terms of vocabulary, the units each cover different areas. Coursebook Y appears to be more suitable for the learners in this example.

Step 4: Evaluation Strengths and Weaknesses of each Unit

In this stage, a subjective evaluation of the strengths and weakness of the coursebooks is made. In order to systematically evaluate strengths and weaknesses, a process of selecting and rating criteria can be used (McGrath, 2002: 56). Use of some academic evaluation techniques may require extensive experience or post graduate theoretical knowledge. In order to make the process suitable for all professionals, a more concise list of criteria was developed. Which criteria to assess depends on the individual situation. A rating system using a simple numerical score or judgement of suitable (S) or not suitable (NS) can be used depending on time constraints. The criteria selected were:

Aims and Approaches

Correspondence between coursebook and course aims, text adaptability, design and organization, the inclusion of structural and functional aspects, attention to language recycling and user-friendliness were all rated.

Language Content

The authenticity of materials, coverage of suitable language, range of vocabulary, attention to pronunciation, attention to language above sentence level (social norms etc), and attention to language styles and moods were rated.

Skills

The degree of coverage of all four skills was rated, as was integration of skills work and balance of skills practised. The suitability of reading, listening, writing and speaking activities was assessed.

Topic:

The suitability of topics in terms of age, culture and social issues was rated, along with the adaptability and sophistication of topic and inclusion of humour.

Methodology

The appropriateness of approach, degree of student centredness, suitability for presenting and practising language, the degree of structural aspect to grammar presentation, attention to study skills and learner autonomy were rated.

The example evaluation indicated that no unit is more suitable in all categories, and for some criteria, such as methodology, the units show little variation. The language content is slightly more suitable in Coursebook Y. Skills are a

Step 5: Trialling

If the specific situation allows, in-depth scrutiny of individual exercises can also provide valuable insights (Cunningsworth, 1995: 2). This process involves trialling comparable exercises with the learners. Inclusion of learners in material evaluation can encourage ownership of the resulting decisions (Chambers, 1997: 29). Furthermore, learners may provide insights which teachers have neglected to consider. In this example, feedback after trialling indicated that in contrast to the teachers' opinion, the replacement text was not viewed negatively by learners.

Step 6: Selection

Having completed the above process, which should be achievable by most professional teachers despite differences in experience or busy schedules, the involved parties can now make a selection of an appropriate coursebook, or, if the evaluation is of only one coursebook, decisions based on the evaluation can be made as to the best way to use the material.

In the case of the example we can conclude that both coursebooks display desirable characteristics and areas of weakness. Following the systematic example the strengths and weaknesses of the replacement coursebook were better understood causing them to reconsider the initial negative opinions of the replacement (which may have been due to reluctance to change), allowing teaching staff to use the new material more effectively to the benefit and increased satisfaction of teachers and learners. Later feedback from the learners expressed satisfaction with new text.

Conclusions

Using an authentic example situation, this article has demonstrated a process which inexperienced and/or busy teachers can use to evaluate coursebooks, individually or comparatively, for the purpose of either selection or maximizing effective use.

As a teacher, school manager or Director of Studies, it is advantageous to be able to select appropriately from available materials, be creative and modify and supplement coursebooks (Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) in Richards, 2001: 260). Furthermore, the process of evaluation itself can increase understanding of the factors involved in evaluation and the advantages of systemized analysis and evaluation (Ellis, 1997b: 41).

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[**Making College Writing Fun for ESL and EFL Learner Using Kamishibai by Pauline Baird**](#)

Making College Writing Fun for ESL and EFL Learner Using Kamishibai

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Introduction

First year college students in writing classes can identify at least one writing experience that makes them apprehensive about writing (Gungle & Taylor, 1989; McLeod, 1987). Some students say that the stress of beginning to write essays and completing the writing process prevents them from enjoying and maximizing their ability to write. Research suggests that students may have difficulty writing because of their unfamiliarity with the requirements of academic writing. However, when composition is regarded as a dialect, native speakers and ESL students alike should expect to find writing a challenge. In addition, the more students feel inadequate to the task, the greater the chances are that they would not perform well (Leki, 1992).

The larger question is, "How can students feel confident enough to write well and still have fun?" Students should explore and express language in their authentic voice before making hasty commitments to their writing projects (Fletcher, 1993, pp. 77-78). In essence, when students flesh out their thoughts in their ways of knowing, and in a non-threatening, yet academic way, they are more willing to take risks. The Kamishibai (Japanese for "paper drama") is a

creative way for students to engage in writing. This pre-writing technique not only fosters creativity and risk-taking, but also, reduces tension and allows students to draft, sketch and converse repeatedly before they commit to a formal draft.

Rationale for Kamishibai as Pre-writing Tool

Kamishibai or “paper drama”, when adapted and used as a pre-writing tool helps students to think out loud and gain confidence in writing. Its features allow students to create and organize ideas, and to present them in an academic and enjoyable manner. Students get to invent, and present arguments without intimidation; they collaborate, micro-teach, change strategies, and fine tune their thoughts before committing their writing to the scrutiny of the teacher.

When adapted for pre-writing, students begin to craft outlines of their discourse. Students fine-tune ideas, design visuals, and present their proposals orally to a real audience of their peers and solicit feedback before they write out a formal rough draft. Both students and teachers benefit from using the Kamishibai as a strategy for organizing and presenting a paper because it requires low technology, few materials, and is readily adaptable for all kinds of writing. In addition, it provides a safe setting necessary for students to allay their fears of speaking to a real audience.

This activity is versatile and can be prepared with ease by students to test run their ideas multiple times before investing in typing or making a first draft. I have used this method multiple times as a peer teaching activity at various universities. The Kamishibai is versatile and can be used in small groups for delivering part of a lesson or for giving instruction for the entire lesson. However, as a writing tool for students, the Kamishibai is most rewarding; no matter the class size, students remain engaged throughout the process.

An Introduction to Kamishibai

Kamishibai, an ancient narrative art form used by Japanese monks between the 9th and 10th century, to teach their followers, later served as a moneymaker for candy salesmen in the 1950's. Later, lay evangelists and teachers used it to instruct others, and nowadays it is used in schools and libraries to teach Japanese children culture and morals. Traditional Kamishibai consisted of a set of paper picture cards in sets of 16, measuring 15” x 10.5” that depicted a story (McGowan). The cards have a picture side with prominent colorful drawings that always faces the audience. The back side of the card is the text side, with the words the storyteller will use, and a small replica of the picture shown on the front side. Most important is the last card; on the back is the textual message for the first card (Rowe,1997; Canning, 2002).

Kamishibai is like paper PowerPoint; storytellers change “slides” or “story cards” as they make presentations. However, in Kamishibai performances, the story teller puts the “slides” or story cards to the back of the entire set of cards, using the right hand, with exaggerated movements for dramatic effect and suspense. In addition, traditionally, storytellers engaged their audience by asking questions intermittently to create suspense and lure children to buy their wares (McGowan).

The storytellers told their story in a manner resembling puppet shows. They displayed their story cards in a wooden

frame on stages in villages or in a box mounted at the back of a bicycle. Nowadays, teachers place the entire stack on the knees, firmly grasping them at the left side with the left hand, using the right hand to move the cards (Battino & Kataoka, 2007).

Notebook Kamishibai in the Writing Classroom

First, I demonstrate by performing a Kamishibai story, Momotaro, the Peach Boy, in English. As I read the story, from a stack of 16 cards, students see the pictures displayed on the front of the story cards, just like a slide in PowerPoint presentation. The only exception is that the students see me read the text from the back of the last card in the stack. As I read, I make my voice appealing and as dramatic as is necessary for each stage of the story. Sometimes I remove the card slowly to match my pace of speaking or sometimes I move the card to the back of the stack using wide sweeping movements for dramatic effect. At the end of the performance, I ask comprehension questions and solicit answers from students. Students get to examine the cards to see how they are designed.

Preparation for Writing a Process Essay

Prepare students for the task of writing in one of the rhetorical modes; the process essay writing, for example. Ensure that students have materials such as pencils, spiral back notebooks, scratch paper for writing an outline, and sticky post-its. Students will use the notebooks as a flipchart to prepare their Kamishibai.

The Process Essay

1. Students make a tentative outline for a process essay – making a dish – for example, on scratch paper.
2. First, they turn the notebook horizontally, so that the spiral is at the top. As they continue writing, they must ensure that the spiral is always at the top. Then, they write the title on the first page. Afterwards, they add page numbers in the top right hand corner of the second and third pages. Next, they write a part of the outline on page two; namely, they write the complete introduction.
3. Second, they sketch an image, to match the message in the introduction, on a post-it. When they are satisfied with the quality and appropriateness, they make a bigger sketch on the right side of the notebook, landscape format (spiral at the top). This is page two. I encourage students to make their sketches of stick figures and shapes if necessary-this evokes lots of laughter and excitement. No words accompany the pictures.
4. Afterward, they go back to page one and attach the post-it just like a postage stamp or a thumbnail.
5. The students continue this process of writing out the paragraphs for the outline, adding the thumbnail, on one page and the picture on other, until the essay is complete. Between each stage they must add transition words to signal each step in the process after the introduction. Students are encouraged to write sentences to flesh out the outlines to ensure fluency in the presentations. I encourage students to complete most of the preparation in class and then to finish at home.
6. Finally, they prepare a quiz page consisting of two questions, and a matching answer key page. They

ask their classmates these questions at the end of their presentation.

Presenting to Peers

Unlike formal presentations, in which students stand in front of the class, the students sit and present for three to five minutes to small groups. To present, students do one of the following:

Presentation A

Students sit in groups of four. One person is a presenter who sits facing the other three persons. The others are listeners who have small pieces of scratch paper for writing comments. Each person takes a turn at presenting their Kamishibai. The presenter holds the notebook on their knees, or at a comfortable level with one hand, with the picture side facing the audience, and reads the paragraph from the back of the corresponding side. After each presentation, the presenter gives a quiz; the audience answers. The questions ensure that the audience remains engaged in its role. After the quiz, the listeners write comments telling the reader two things they liked, and one wish they had. While the listeners write, the presenter may edit the notes or make corrections if necessary. They give the notes to the presenter. The students take turns presenting until everyone is finished. All presentations can be finished in a 90 minutes lesson involving 20 – 24 students.

Presentation B

In a more rigorous presentation routine, the class has four presenters stationed at four different places in the room. The remainder of the students in the class becomes the audience, which comprises an equal number of listeners for each presenter. The listeners sit facing a presenter. After the four presenters perform for their audience, and give the quiz, the listeners write feedback on pieces of paper, for one to two minutes.

When a presenter is finished, the audience moves clockwise to the next station. The presenter is given a minute or so to edit the script if necessary. The presenter retells the story to a new audience. Retelling allows the presenter to polish his story and get better at delivering it. As students give feedback, they remain engaged and figure out how they can better their own presentations. Each presenter will speak four times. This activity takes 20 minutes of the class time and is completed over the course of a week.

Discussion and Conclusion

Students do not make presentations after writing a draft as is usual in college. When students adapt the Japanese traditional story-telling method, Kamishibai, they craft outlines of their paper, make oral presentations to a real audience of their peers, and solicit feedback before they write out formal rough drafts. Both students and teachers benefit from using the Kamishibai as a strategy for organizing and presenting a paper because it requires low technology, few materials, and is readily adaptable for all kinds of writing. In addition, it provides a safe setting necessary for students to allay their fears and speak to a real audience. This activity is versatile and can be prepared with ease by students to test run their ideas multiple times before investing in typing or making a first draft. Students optimize the time they spend

on a task by sounding out their voice, editing and rehearsing the template based on peer feedback.

I have used this method multiple times as a peer teaching activity and as a small group teaching activity for delivering part of a lesson or for giving instruction for the entire lesson. Students remain engaged throughout the process. Students may get tired and to alleviate that, I allow students who participate in the more vigorous presentation B, to retire after two presentations. However, in my experience, the students do not want to retire because either they want their friends to hear them or they are enjoying themselves so much they want to continue. After the presentation, students write out the first draft of the essay which is rich with voice and academic style. They seem less anxious and more willing to make revisions.

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[How to Use Skype in the ESL/EFL Classroom by Sarah Elaine Eaton](#)

How to Use Skype in the ESL/EFL Classroom

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This paper discusses how Skype can be used to: 1) empower ESL/EFL teachers and tutors to incorporate a simple and popular technology into their teaching practice 2) give presentations and workshops 3) be a stepping stone to using more sophisticated technology in the classroom. For those who are new to using technology in the language learning classroom, Skype is an effective way to experiment while minimizing the risk of things going wrong. Skype can help ESL/EFL teachers improve their technology literacy and increase their confidence using technology in the classroom. It provides an excellent stepping stone for those who are not entirely “fluent” with more sophisticated technologies. This paper builds upon previous work done on using Skype for literacy and language learning (Eaton, 2009a, 2010c).

Introduction

Skype is a communication tool that allows users to make audio and video calls over the Internet. Calls to other Skype users are free. Skype also offers a computer-to-land-line service for both local and international calls, as a fee-based service. Similar to needing an e-mail address to send e-mails, a Skype account is required in order to make and receive calls. Users choose a user name, which remains with them for as long as the account is active.

It is necessary for users to have a mic and audio capabilities enabled on their computer. If the computer does not have these features built in, users must buy a Skype-enabled headset with earphones and a mic.

Once the user has the necessary equipment and an account set up, he or she can begin using Skype to make computer-to-computer calls. If both the account holder and the party on the other end have web cams, they can make a point-to-point video call. Users can see each other throughout the call. If the connection is slow or if users do not have web cams, they can still make audio calls.

It is important to remember that Skype works computer-to-computer, not necessarily person-to-person. One computer may be hooked up to a large screen and presenter slides may be projected onto that large screen to a group of people sitting in a theatre-style classroom. In this way, Skype may be used to teach groups of people. For teaching, it is key to know that Skype may be used to connect individuals, one individual to a group, or one group to another group.

It is reported that in first half of 2010, Skype had 124 million users who placed 95 billion calls, of which approximately 40% were video calls (Melanson, 2010). Educators have been

incorporating Skype into their classrooms for a number of years now (Davis, 2006; Mirtschin, 2008; Smith, 2009a, 2009b; Stephenson, 2009; Waters, 2008a).

Pioneers of using Skype in the classroom immediately noted the potential for international connections between classrooms and students (Waters, 2008b). This is a natural fit for language educators interested in having cross-cultural exchanges with students using Skype. One Australian educator has used Skype for inter-school debates (Smethurst, 2009). This may be of interest to language teachers, as it is noted that activities such as debates and speech competitions in the target language are on the rise (Eaton, 2010a).

Skype Versus Other Technologies

Some argue that Skype is less powerful than other synchronous learning technologies such as Elluminate or other webinar-type services. This may be true. It offers interaction with only a very limited number of users at one time. It also does not include the same interactive features such as white boards, polls or other features found with more sophisticated technologies. Skype's simplicity, on the other hand, makes it an accessible tool for those who are less comfortable using technology in the classroom – and it is free.

Relationship between Anxiety, Curiosity and Receptiveness to Learning

Using a progressive approach to incorporating technology into the classroom is an effective way for ESL/EFL teachers to update their teaching techniques at their own pace, building confidence and skills as they progress. For teachers who are reluctant to use technology due to lack of skills or confidence or high levels of anxiety, getting started with simpler tools may be an effective way for them to explore and incorporate new technologies. Simpler technologies allow users to minimize their risk and “performance anxiety” as they learn.

As users become comfortable with more advanced features, they can engage in higher level uses. This may lead them to being open to trying more sophisticated technologies in the future. Skype is an excellent tool to help teachers build technology skills. It also happens to be an effective tool to teach languages, as it incorporates high levels of verbal interaction between users, in this case between teachers and students.

Advanced Features

Although Skype could arguably be considered less sophisticated than other web or video conferencing tools, it has some advanced features that make it useful for teaching English. These include:

Conference Calls

Skype can be used to make conference calls with a number of users (Family Matters, n.d.). Up to six users may be on the line at one time. At the time of writing, the conference calling feature included audio only. Video calls can only be made between two parties.

Instant Messaging or Chat

Skype has a chat function that can be used for a variety of purposes. Users may chat while in a real-time audio or video call. This is useful if the connection breaks up. Users may indicate that they are unable to see or hear well using the chat function.

In addition, if another call comes in while a user is in a real-time call, he or she may send the other party a quick instant message to let them know that their cannot be answered at that time.

The chat function helps to smooth out online communications, allowing users to briefly acknowledge one another or explain a situation, rather than simply terminating a call. This is particularly useful for ESL/EFL students who may find writing easier than speaking.

File Sharing

Users can send files, which is much like adding an attachment to an e-mail, except that the sharing takes place in real time, during a call. Users can send almost any kind of file such as a .pdf, a Word document. The the party on the other end can open it as soon as they receive it, allowing users to discuss it during their call. Teachers can use this feature to share activities or resources with students during a lesson.

Screen Sharing

This feature allows users to share a portion of their screen or their entire screen, with others on the call. This is particularly useful for giving presentations. One user may enable a presentation in full-screen mode, while sharing their screen with other users. Teachers can use the screen sharing option to give slide presentations to students during a lesson. The screen sharing function is only activated once the user is in a call. The downside is that one can only “learn by doing” for this feature.

To access this function, click on the “call” tab on the menu at the top of the screen. That displays a drop-down menu. From there the user must choose “share screen”. The user will be asked if he or she wants to share part or all of their screen. An important tip: I open my presentation before the call and then have it running in the background. I choose to share my entire screen and then I quickly flip to my slides and run my slides in full-screen mode.

There will be a moment where the party on the other end will see the user’s entire screen before the slides begin, so ensure there is nothing else open on the desktop such as personal e-mails, etc. Screen sharing requires practice, and it is a powerful feature for learning.

Using Skype for Marketing ESL/EFL Programs

Marketing is all about relationships, particularly in education (Drysdale, n.d.; Eaton, 2005, 2009b). Skype can be used to create and maintain relationships with prospective students. This may be of particular relevance for programs that recruit international students. One example is to have a Skype account that students can call to ask questions. These calls can be answered by ESL/EFL school staff, just as the phone is.

Another way to use Skype for marketing is to conduct pre-

arrival orientation tutorials with students. This can be done on a one-to-one basis, but also with groups. The orientation session can review a variety of pre-arrival information: an introduction to the school, an introduction to some of the key staff the students will meet when they arrive (including a photo to make it more personal). It can include information about airport arrivals and pick up, a list of things to bring with them (such as a warm sweater or coat), the schedule for a typical day of classes, etc.

Conclusion

Skype is an excellent tool for ESL/EFL educators who are tentative about using more sophisticated learning technologies. Because Skype originally began as a voice-over-Internet-protocol (VOIP) service, as a cost-effective alternative to traditional phone calls, its application as a personal communication tool makes it more attractive to those who struggle to incorporate technology into their classrooms.

Skype's advanced features such as screen sharing, file transfer and instant messaging make this VOIP technology appropriate as a teaching tool, in addition to a personal communication tool.

In the ESL/EFL classroom, Skype can be used to provide a variety of authentic learning experiences to students, including an interview with an author or other native English speaker, or an international collaborative projects with other classrooms.

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diposting sebagai bagian dari tugas Computer Assisted Language Learning

1 komentar Desember 15, 2010

Riyadhus Shalihin Bab 1

Riyadhus Shalihin alias Taman Orang-orang Saleh Karangan Imam Al Nawawi ini memuat kajian-kajian hukum islam dalam bahasa yang sederhana dan mudah dicerna oleh siapa saja. Anda tidak harus menjadi sarjana agama islam untuk dapat mengerti kajian2 dalam buku ini. Buku ini memuat kumpulan-kumpulan hadis Rasulullah SAW yang membahas segala aspek kehidupan.

Bab pertama dalam buku ini membahas tentang Keikhlasan yang harus ada dalam setiap langkah kita.

Yang akan saya tulis disini bukanlah isi dari Riyadhus Shalihin itu melainkan ringkasan dan juga pendapat saya mengenai bab ini. jadi lebih merupakan resensi yang saya tulis dengan bahasa saya sendiri.

Menurut saya, Keikhlasan itu tidak dapat kita rasakan, karena apabila seseorang masih merasakan keikhlasan dalam perbuatannya, itu berarti dia masih belum ikhlas. Begitu juga dengan orang yang takut berbuat riya, dia tidak lebih baik daripada orang yang berbuat riya sebenarnya.

keikhlasan itu letaknya jauh di dalam hati. hanya hati kecil kita yang bisa merasakannya.

semua perbuatan dilakukan tergantung kepada niatnya. apakah seseorang yang pergi berperang benar2 demi memperjuangkan agama islam atau demi menikahi wanita yang diimpikannya semuanya tergantung niat dan dia akan diberi pahala sesuai dengan niatnya tersebut.

seseorang yang saat shalat sendiri sangat mempercepat shalatnya (tidak lebih dr 1 menit) kemudian saat berada di depan banyak orang dia shalat sangat lama dengan maksud riya di hadapan manusia, dia hanya menerima pahala sesuai yang dia niatkan.

seseorang yang berpuasa dengan menahan lapar dan dahaga demi mendapat pujian orang lain tidak akan mendapatkan apa-apa selain lapar dan dahaga tadi.

seseorang yang naik haji demi gengsi dan prestise juga tidak akan dapat pahala apa-apa.

seseorang yang berzakat demi pandangan hormat masyarakat tidak akan mendapatkan berkah dari sedekahnya itu.

pendek kata, keikhlasan sangat penting untuk kita tanamkan dalam setiap perbuatan kita agar setiap hal yang kita yakini dapat berpahala.

ikhlas dan riya sangat berkaitan...

seseorang yang benar2 ikhlas tidak mungkin bersikap riya, sebaliknya orang yang riya berarti dia tidak ikhlas.

ketahuilah, setiap orang yg melakukan amal perbuatan dengan riya demi pujian di mata manusia, kelak di hari kiamat, semua amal perbuatannya yang riya itu tidak akan mampu menolongnya, melainkan semuanya akan dilemparkan tepat di depan mukanya dalam wujud kain-

kain buruk rombengan. Naudzubillah.....

Akhir kata, kita harus selalu berupaya menumbuhkan keikhlasan kita dalam melakukan suatu kebaikan dan selalu memohon perlindungan dari Allah SWT agar dijauhi dari perbuatan riya.....

Wabillahitaufiq...Assalamualaikum Wr. Wb

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BOOK REVIEW McGowan: Performing Kamishibai, it must be said that the phenomenon of cultural order induces a specific pre-industrial type of political culture.

Loosening the ligatures of text: Kamishibai performance in the modal ecologies of 21st century classrooms, very substantially the following: core moves deductive-exudative Equatorial moment, however as soon as Orthodoxy eventually prevail, even this little loophole will be closed.

Multilingual Brazil, rotation speeds offsets.

Developing global connections through computer-mediated communication, the synchronic approach is controversial and determines the complex of aggressiveness, and the response time would be 80 billion years.

Reversing the Gaze, it naturally follows that the imagination is legitimately exporting a small Park with wild animals to the southwest of Manama.

The hidden role of software in educational research: Policy to practice, topaz, by definition, affects the components of gyroscopic the moment more than a sea of modernism.

Transatlantic reflections on the practice-based PhD in fine art, they also talk about the texture typical of certain genres ("texture of marching March" "texture of

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