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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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Invited Keynote Speakers

Emerita Bañados

Universidad de Concepción, Concepción, Chile

Integrating theory into practice in the design and development of an interactive multimedia CALL platform in a b-learning environment for EFL

Abstract

Faced with the need to find more effective teaching and learning methods to more efficiently achieve the goal of making Chilean learners communicate in English, an attempt has been made to integrate theory into practice mediated by technology. Thus, this presentation showcases a b-learning communicative English program designed to develop integrated linguistic skills, with a focus on oral production, and on learning the language together with features of its culture, to enable Chilean learners to communicate in foreign sociocultural contexts. The presentation focuses on the interactive network-based multimedia environment, backbone element of the b-learning program, depicting the product of this integration to promote conditions for foreign language learning. It particularly addresses how ICT has been used to create opportunities for input and oral output, and for three types of interaction considered beneficial for language learning: human/computer, human/human, and intrapersonal through CALL tasks in a Latin American country context.

Short Paper

The Government of Chile seeks to create the conditions for the country's transition into a knowledge-based economy. A double literacy of communicative competence in English and skills in the use of ICT is considered crucial to meet this challenge, and a priority for equity to facilitate citizens' proactive participation in the current global scenario, broadening Chilean citizens' spectrum for career opportunities.

Nevertheless, a striking reality reveals that the average level of English that Chilean students learn at state-maintained and subsidized schools is insufficient to enable them to function in English, only 2% of the population is able to communicate in English efficiently. After 600 hours of instruction, the average students arrive at tertiary education with a very poor command of English (below ALTE 1/A1 level). The teaching of English within the national elementary and high school education context implies dealing with difficulties such as a lack of EFL teachers to cover the population demand, a large number of students per class (usually more than 40), a heavy teaching load (usually 40 direct teaching hours), a lack of language learning materials, among other issues. Besides, the remote geographical location of the country makes it impossible for the average Chilean citizen to afford to travel to English-speaking countries to learn and experience using the language in a real sociocultural context.

Faced with this reality, what can we as researchers, CALL practitioners and teachers do to contribute to narrow the gap imposed by these economic and social constraints? How can we provide students of underprivileged regions with more opportunities to broaden their academic and professional scope and to have equal opportunities to proactively participate in an increasingly global society? The expectations are worth the effort of devising ways to integrate

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and harmonize theory, technology and practice to learn to communicate in a foreign language more efficiently.

The program presented here is the result of a Chilean Ministry of Education -World Bank- University supported project to innovate pedagogical practices using technology. As a starting point, we advocated to a tertiary education learners' needs analysis with the hope to create a pedagogical model to more efficiently meet those needs. We then engaged in the selection of ICT resources for language learning, in syllabus and courseware materials design and development, in teacher training envisioning ways to creatively put theoretical principles into practice, in devising and developing balanced tests to objectively and coherently assess the communicative goals set. At the same time, we designed, created and judgementally evaluated the pedagogical materials, supervised technical implementation, and managed the utilization of the system of our end users. The project provided EFL teachers the opportunity to assume new roles: to become CALL material designer and developer, script writer, manager and producer of media resources, work flow manager, online tutor, manager of the language learning environment, and mediator to open communication channels with a multidisciplinary team.

The b-learning pedagogical model implemented (Bañados, 2006) combines: (a) Learners' independent work with CALL tasks for developing language skills in a network-based interactive multimedia environment, (b) online tutoring in web portfolios, (c) online interaction with global/local community, (d) online and face-to-face tutoring by EFL teacher-tutors, (e) face-to-face classes with EFL teacher-tutors, (f) communication and culture workshops with native speakers of English.

The interactive multimedia environment consists of a central web platform that contains more than 400 hours of CALL tasks and e-learning materials, distributed into four content-based modules. Learners can access 73 contextualized videos, more than 9.000 audios with visual material, more than 5.000 animations in flash, and the tools they need to support their language learning processes in the platform. Some of the CALL criteria that guided the overall online software design were: management, control, input, content, and feedback.

The CALL tasks developed provide learners with opportunities to learn by doing and to develop their autonomy, as they manage their learning agenda and work independently at their own pace in an attractive, fun-filled e-learning environment which allows for multimodal input exposure and for corrective feedback. Learners work with the aural language in a variety of tasks that provide ample opportunity to get the meaning, and make connections between meaning and form. Learners interact with the computer doing tasks which give them intensive instruction and practice in discrimination of prosodic and suprasegmental features, speaking, reading and writing skills, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and integrated skills.

The theoretical and pedagogical framework integrated in the design and development of the interactive network-based multimedia environment for EFL -UdeC English Online- draws from interactionists', cognitive and sociocognitive perspectives on SLA (Krashen 1981, 1982; Skehan, 1998; Chapelle, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005; Ellis, 1999; Gass, 1997; Long,1996; Sharwood 1993; Robinson,1995; Warschauer,1997), CALL conceptualization (Levy, 1997), conditions for optimal CALL environments (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999). The language learning tasks have been developed considering design issues for CASLA materials, criteria for CALL tasks appropriateness (Chapelle, 2001,2003), methodological principles for task-based language teaching in distance learning (Doughty & Long, 2003) and task-based instruction (Candlin, 1987; Nunan 1989; Long, 1989; Willis, 1996). A range of teaching methodologies for network-based language teaching and e-learning pedagogy (Chapelle, 2003, 2005; Chapelle & Jamieson 2002; Chun & Plass, 2000; Warschauer, 1997; Warschauer & Kern, 2000; Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000; Felix, 2003), research findings on effective corrective feedback strategies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ferreira, Bañados, Salazar, 2004-2006) have been taken into account. All tasks have been developed on this ground, exploiting the capabilities of

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ICT functionalities, multimedia applications and CMC for putting foreign/second language learning theoretical principles into practice.

Evaluation of this integration has been oriented towards two main lines: the learners' language, and the b-learning program. We have focused on evaluating learning outcomes, particularly on the impact of the program on speaking skills, as well as on listening, reading, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and integrated skills.   Pre- / post- test instruments have been used to assess improvements in language skills in a longitudinal fashion, comparing the results obtained by learners at diagnostic and final online tests and oral interviews. The evaluation of the impact of the program on quality and equity, based on learners' language learning outcomes, has been considered as an indicator of the effectiveness of the pedagogical model created. Learner's satisfaction with the program has been assessed through satisfaction surveys. The CALL tasks and e-learning materials have been examined considering the following CALL criteria (Chapelle, 2001): language learning potential, meaning focus, learner fit, authenticity, positive impact, and practicality, both judgementally and empirically.

The efforts have been worth the results, since the integration of theory into practice here presented has empirically proved to be effective. We would currently like to focus on research to evaluate which factors are more critical to achieve these results, what are teachers' perceptions on working with this b-learning model? How much is the experienced liked by them and their students? Are the same communicative goals achieved when transferring this model to different settings? Among many other issues. The triangulation of results in all these areas may contribute to provide evidence to support CALL effectiveness.

Keywords

Use of ICT in EFL, e-learning, b-learning, interaction, CALL tasks, TBLT, courseware and materials design for SLA, intercultural CMC.

Bio Data

Emerita Bañados is an associate professor at the University of Concepcion. She is the Director of the b-learning Communicative English Program UdeC English Online. She designed the b-learning pedagogical model and led its implementation as project coordinator and developer. Her work experience and research interests include: applied linguistics, the use of ICT for foreign language learning, CALL/ICALL, e-learning and b-learning, courseware and materials design, TBLT in online systems, feedback, virtual foreign/native speaker interaction through computer videoconferencing, CSCL, and teacher training. She has presented in CALICO, EUROCALL, WORLDCALL, IATEFL, TBLT, and has been invited as special guest speaker to the APEC Future Education Forum in South Korea. She has been invited as an expert advisor to develop EFL projects using technology in Chilean and Latin American universities, and to evaluate Ministry of Education project grants.

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Dorothy M. Chun

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Integrating Research Results into the Design and Development of CALL Materials

Abstract

In this talk, I discuss how research on three types of CALL materials has informed practice and development and vice versa. First, I summarize how empirical studies of our multimedia software for reading German short stories have led to continual refinement of the software. Second, our experiences with online intercultural exchanges between UCSB and a German university have shown that only through intense study of learner production can we understand the outcomes, both positive and negative, of such exchanges. And finally, I describe preliminary results of a recent attempt to incorporate speech recognition software into a course on German phonetics and intonation.

Short Paper

In this presentation, I describe and discuss how my research over the last two decades on several different CALL projects has informed practice and development and vice versa. First, I summarize how empirical studies with hundreds of students at several different universities who used *CyberBuch*, our multimedia software for reading German short stories, have led to continual refinement of the software. We have studied the effect of different types of annotations (translations, pictures, videos) on vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Based on formative evaluation of the software, as well as learner performance on tests and their actual use of the software, we have modified the program over the years. Second, I discuss how our online (CMC) intercultural exchanges between students learning German at UCSB and students studying English at a German university were continually modified after intense scrutiny of the students' forum and email entries indicated that our goals were not being met. Finally, I describe preliminary results of a recent attempt to incorporate speech recognition software into a course on German phonetics and intonation. Using *Tell Me More* software that displays the pitch curves of both native speakers' utterances and learners' attempts to say the same words and sentences, I investigated whether providing learners with visual feedback of their intonational curves helped improve their pronunciation. The motivation for developing the multimedia project for L2 reading was a practical one: colleagues who taught upper division German courses lamented the fact that students could not read authentic texts after two years of studying German. We hoped that by providing multimedia annotations of unknown vocabulary items, students would learn the meanings of these words at the click of the mouse and in turn understand the text more readily.

In each of the rounds of testing, we gleaned new information, e.g., about how the program was being used, whether the annotations were effective for vocabulary learning and reading comprehension, and what the relationship was between working memory capacity (short-term memory) and lookup behavior. A pilot study, which showed disappointing results for vocabulary acquisition, caused us to revise the vocabulary test and "test how we teach" (Chun & Plass, 1995). It also led us to develop comprehension exercises interspersed within the text to check understanding at regular intervals. The first large-scale study revealed exactly which annotations students looked up when they were given complete freedom to look up whatever they wished, and it also showed that when they looked up both a visual and a verbal annotation, they learned more vocabulary items (Chun & Plass, 1996a).

A second study found that viewing the video preview of the short story helped students recall more events in the text (Chun & Plass, 1996b). Another study with a more rigorous experimental design divided the learners into treatment groups and found that visual

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annotations were not always helpful for learners who preferred verbal modes of information ostensibly due to unnecessary cognitive load (Plass et al., 2003). A longitudinal study of learner lookup behavior provided surprising results of significantly more lookups of word translations than visual annotations (Chun, 2001). The study of working memory and lookup behavior suggested that students use the multimedia look-up features of the software to compensate for working memory capacity constraints (Chun & Payne, 2004). The results of these studies all caused us to re-evaluate how we wanted the students to use the software and how it could be improved.

The Intercultural Exchange (*ICE*) projects that used Web-based CMC tools were designed to bring together students learning German at UCSB with students studying English at the University of Kassel in Germany for online discussions about cultural topics. The projects were all based on the *Cultura* model developed by Furstenberg and her colleagues at MIT (Furstenberg et al. 2001). In the first year of the exchange, students posted entries in asynchronous online forums, and in addition, students were paired up for email exchanges with a partner. Although students expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction with the exchange, there was no follow-up in the classroom, due primarily to lack of time and to the fact that the exchange had not been integrated into the curriculum. Through a targeted examination of the forum and email data, we discovered that students were not demonstrating the type of intercultural learning or awareness that we had hoped they would (Chun & Wade, 2004). This led us to revise the way the exchange was done and to follow up on the online discussions with in-class presentations and discussions. Although this proved to be helpful in clarifying certain issues and resulted in enhanced oral proficiency (Wade, 2004), we were again surprised that certain prejudices were in fact being strengthened rather than reduced and tried to address this issue in the next round of the exchange (Wade, 2005). What we concluded from all of the studies was that it is imperative to begin with specific goals and research questions and to carefully examine the data produced by the students in order to improve the design of the exchange as well as to be more successful in achieving the desired goals.

Finally, for the last two decades I have had a keen interest in using technology to aid in the teaching and learning of intonation (Chun, 1989, 1998, 2002). My recent attempt to have students use speech recognition software that could display their intonational curves showed mixed results among learners. In a German phonetics course in which we targeted not only improving pronunciation of segmentals (vowels and consonants) but also of suprasegmentals (intonation, rhythm, pauses), students used Auralog's *Tell Me More* software to practice and improve their German pronunciation and intonation. In addition to regular use of the software, I also asked students to systematically compare their intonation curves with those of native speakers uttering the same sentences and to describe the differences they saw and heard. It was hoped that raising awareness or consciousness about these suprasegmental features and practicing with the software would help them to improve their own speech, as has been demonstrated in other studies (Hardison, 2004, 2005). But preliminary analyses indicated that the short exposure to and use of the program (only about five weeks) was not sufficient for any significant improvement. It has been and continues to be my belief that technological advances in acoustic phonetic software have the potential to help learners improve their pronunciation and speaking competence but that sound pedagogically based feedback beyond simply displaying pitch curves is still lacking, yet essential. Such feedback must be incorporated into speech recognition programs, and research must be conducted to assess the effect of both the software and the feedback.

In summary, I hope to have shown how practical pedagogical concerns are often the impetus for developing CALL materials and that once materials have been developed, they must be trialed and studied systematically in order to determine their effectiveness and the ways in which they can be improved.

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Keywords

L2 reading, pronunciation, intonation, intercultural exchange, multimedia annotations, CMC, speech recognition software

Bio Data

Dorothy Chun (Ph.D., UC Berkeley) is Professor of German and Applied Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research areas include: L2 phonology and intonation, L2 reading and vocabulary acquisition, and CALL. She has conducted studies on cognitive process in learning with multimedia and has authored CD-ROMs and websites for language and culture acquisition. Her publications include *Discourse Intonation in L2: From*

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Theory and Research to Practice, 2002, John Benjamins and articles in *Modern Language Journal, Foreign Language Annals, System, CALL, Journal of Educational Psychology*, and the online journal *Language Learning & Technology*, which she edits.

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Glenn Stockwell

Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan

Practice-Based and Practice-Oriented Research: Building Bridges between Research and Practice

Abstract

In this presentation, I would like to consider the relationship between research and practice in terms of the distinction between "practice-based research" and "practice-oriented research." I will discuss a survey of recent research in the CALL literature in order to determine the proportions of these types of research, and identify some of the characteristics differentiating them, along with some possible reasons for the differences. I would like to conclude with a discussion of how an awareness of the different types of research may help to build bridges between research and practice in CALL.

Short Paper

It is well established that research regarding the practical usage of technology in the language classroom is a central element of CALL, where a primary aim of such research is to build upon our knowledge of how these technologies may best be used to enhance the language learning process. Those who are involved in using CALL, however, are often faced with a dilemma, where on the one hand there is a need to maintain practical solutions to problems they face in their daily teaching and learning environments, and on the other hand, there is pressure to publish research to satisfy institutional requirements. With this pressure from both a research and practice perspective, it is easy to lose track of the best way to approach each of them. The literature is certainly not devoid of resources for CALL practitioners to refer to, and there is a growing body of publications which do consider these factors, some that focus predominantly on research in CALL (e.g., Egbert & Petrie, 2005, Hubbard, 2005; Felix, 2008), some on research together with other elements including practice (e.g., Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999), and still others that provide lengthy discussions on both research and practice in the CALL context (e.g., Beatty, 2003; Levy & Stockwell, 2006). However, given the importance of these two key components of CALL, it is somewhat surprising to note that there still remains very little discussion of the relationship between them.

Two terms that are often cited with regard to the relationship between research and practice are "practice-based research" and "practice-oriented research." Despite the relative frequency with which these terms are used in educational contexts, a concrete distinction between the two remains deceptively elusive. Used independently, the distinction may be somewhat blurred, with both terms used interchangeably to refer to a type of research that maintains a strong link to practice (e.g., Sihn & Kraus, 1999). If we look at them combination, however, it is possible to see that a difference may lie in the way in which research and practice interrelate with each other. A working definition may be devised, then, considering the conjoining words linking research and practice, where practice-*based* research includes research that emerges as a result of practice, and practice-*oriented* research refers to research that is designed to bring about a change in practice. While these two would rarely be mutually exclusive, practice-based research and practice-oriented oriented research would be thought to often differ not only in their goals but also in how the research is conceived and conducted.

Based on this working definition, and considering that a large number of those working with CALL are in a constant state of adopting and adapting new technologies to fit their individual environments (see Stockwell, 2007), we may intuitively assume that research in the CALL

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context is predominantly practice-based, revolving around, among other things, descriptions of how technologies or technology-based learning materials affect the learning process in terms of quantity and/or quality of language produced, exchanged or acquired, and learner perceptions of and attitudes towards these technologies or materials. In practice-based research, although reference to previous work is most often cited, it is frequently as a rationale for a new approach rather than as a building block on which to base continuous or continued research, which would be more a feature of practice-oriented research.

Derived from this assumption, in this presentation I will discuss a survey of recent research in the CALL literature in order to determine the proportions of practice-based research and practice-oriented research, and identify some of the characteristics differentiating these two types of research in the CALL context. I would like to conclude with a discussion of the possible reasons for the disparity, and to provide some thoughts on the functions of each of type of research. This presentation is not intended to prescriptively advocate one type of research in preference to the other, since both have important roles to play. Rather, I would like to suggest that there are variations in the ways in which the relationship between research and practice may be considered, and that through awareness of these variations, we as CALL researchers may consider the best way to build bridges between research and practice.

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Keywords

CALL research, practice in CALL, meta-analyses

Bio Data

Glenn Stockwell (Ph.D.) is Professor in Applied Linguistics at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. He is co-author of CALL Dimensions (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006) with Mike Levy, and published widely in international journals in the field of CALL. He is the general editor of The JALT CALL Journal, and member of the academic advisory boards and review boards of the ReCALL Journal, Computer Assisted Language Learning, and the CALICO Journal.

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Selected Keynote Speakers

Kristi Jauregi*, Emerita Bañados** & Jerónimo Morales***

* Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
** Universidad de Concepción, Concepción, Chile
*** Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain

**Distant Intercultural Communication through Video-Web Communication:
Preliminary Results of Four Years of Experience**

Abstract

Studies on telecollaboration have reported positive results on the language acquisition of second language learners engaged in online collaboration, but less positive outcomes for their intercultural development (O'Douwd & Ritter, 2006). The Spanish Department at Utrecht University has been experimenting with the use of video-web communication tools with partner institutions in Spain and Chile with the objective of enhancing intercultural communicative competence of L2 learners and expertise of future native language teachers. In our presentation we will describe the project experiences and will focus on the effects that such a synchronous tool, which combines online visual, audio and textual features, has in communication processes.

References:
O'Dowd, R. & Ritter, M. (2006): Understanding and working with "failed communication" in telecollaborative exchanges. *CALICO* Journal, 23 (3), 1-20.

Short Paper

Studies on telecollaboration have reported positive results on the language acquisition of second language learners engaged in online collaboration (Pellettieri, 2000; Shekary & Tahririan, 2006; Smith, 2004; Sotillo, 2000; Tudini, 2003), but less positive outcomes for their intercultural development (Belz, 2003; O'Douwd & Ritter, 2006; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Since 2005 the Spanish Department of Utrecht University has been experimenting with video-web communication tools (also called web-conferencing tools) with partner institutions in Spain (universities of Granada, Barcelona and Valencia) and in Chile (Universidad de Concepción) with the objective of enhancing intercultural communicative competence of L2 learners and expertise of future native language teachers. In our presentation we will describe the project experiences and will focus on the effects that such a synchronous tool, which combines online visual, audio and textual features, has in communication processes. We will attempt to answer the following questions:

- Under which conditions can Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997) be furthered using video-web communication tools?
- Are communication processes supported by chat and video-web technology similar?
- Does visual information (seeing each other while talking to each other) hinder communication processes or just enhance them? And how does it happen?
- Does anonymity favour communication processes, as it has been suggested in the literature?

The project was embedded in the academic programs of all participants:

1. At Utrecht University in two Spanish language courses, (B1 and B2 levels respectively, according to the Common European Framework of Reference).
2. In Granada and Valencia in the Educational Master for future language teachers of Spanish as L2.
3. In Concepción (Chile) within the course "Introduction to Pragmatics" for future language teachers as L1.

Since 2005 approximately 80 Dutch students and 80 Latin students (both from Spain and Chile) have participated in the project during periods of two months. Participants engaged weekly in intercultural encounters according to the conditions set by communicative tasks especially developed for the project at B1 and B2 levels (CEFR).
Three sources of data were gathered during the project: (1) evaluation surveys completed by Dutch and Latin participants, (2) analysis of recorded interactions and (3) students' blog postings.

In the presentation we will report results from these data sources.

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Keywords

Video-communication, computer mediated communication, web-conferencing, synchronous communication, intercultural competence, e-learning

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publishing of students´ products. She now directs the international project about video-web communication to enhance intercultural communicative competence of Dutch students of Spanish and in-service native language teachers in Spain and Chile. She has presented experiences and results of the project in national and international conferences and has published on the issue.

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Integration of ICT in LSP Learning at the NTUA

Abstract

The Foreign Language Centre of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) in cooperation with the University Computer Centre developed e-learning courses for both autonomous learning and assessment, adjusted to the different needs concerning the status of the language courses. The e-learning course focused on assessment is supplementary to the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) compulsory fourth semester course. It replaced the term assignment and has been used since 2004. The Italian and English SP e-learning courses focused on autonomous learning aim at the integration of the traditional teaching/learning in the classroom with the autonomous learning through new technologies.

Short Paper

Introduction
The Foreign Language Centre of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) in cooperation with the University Computer Centre are in the process of developing e-learning courses which contain English and Italian for Specific Purposes material to meet the students' prospective professional needs. The scope of the project is to innovate and improve the ongoing teaching methods and surpass the specific problems faced in the LSP teaching at the NTUA by taking advantage of technology.

Objectives of the e-learning courses
The main objective of the project was to develop e-learning courses which would motivate interest and foster positive attitudes towards SP language learning, and also enhance LSP competence. Taking into account the modern educational principles and the particular situation at the NTUA more specific goals were formulated to:

- facilitate the construction of students' personal language knowledge using innovative teaching methods
- promote learners' autonomy through self-paced LSP e-learning courses
- optimize the learning resources providing authentic materials for LSP
- involve students in a real e-learning environment.

The ESP e-learning course focused on assessment
The need of developing an e-learning course focused on assessment emerged from the particular situation faced at the English SP course at the NTUA. In the fourth semester more than 2200 students are enrolled in this course and the instructors of English are only three.

The e-learning course developed is supplementary to the ESP compulsory course. It replaced the term assignment, thus relieving the instructors from the great load of marking as students are automatically assessed by the Learning Management System. It provides learning resources through authentic materials for ESP on major engineering disciplines. It is focused on reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and listening skills. It is fully interactive,

appealing and enriched with multimedia. It has been used since 2004 and is constantly revised. A statistical analysis was conducted and its results were very encouraging.

This e-learning course was realized using IBM Lotus Learning Management System (LMS) and its own Authoring Tool. The IBM Authoring Tool is user-friendly and also a powerful tool for course creation. It enables course developers to create course outlines and content, including assessments with minimum dependence on IT experts. Thus, the instructors of English were able to create the e-learning course almost by themselves after a short training from the Computer Centre team.

Italian and English SP e-learning courses focused on autonomous learning
These e-learning courses, which involve blended learning, are being developed at the moment and aim at an integration of the traditional teaching/learning in the classroom with the autonomous learning through new technologies. This combination has the following advantages:

- the students have the opportunity to enhance and update their knowledge through autonomy in learning
- the instructor has the possibility to enrich the existing materials and develop new ones to meet the students' needs
- in class the students can reinforce their knowledge and clarify their queries with the instructor.

The blended learning e-courses comprise the following:

- pre-listening and pre-reading skills to refresh students' previous experiences and pre-existed knowledge
- reading and listening comprehension of authentic texts on technical issues of their interests, followed by a series of different interactive activities, aiming at autonomous learning. These activities are developed in various ways to meet the students' cognitive and learning styles. The materials are presented in the form of hypertexts, linking students to websites so that they can process and broaden their knowledge
- comprehension exercises
- vocabulary practice exercises
- self-evaluation test at the end of every unit
- glossary to test their new knowledge
- grammar remarks concerning the linguistic structure of the technical language.

The LMS used for the English e-learning course is the IBM Lotus LMS, since it has proved to handle the great load of students efficiently. Moreover, the instructors' previous experience of using the IBM authoring tool was utilized once again. However, for the Italian e-learning course, in which a small number of students is enrolled, the LMS Moodle was used. Moodle is a powerful and a well-known open source LMS. The material was appropriately converted for the Moodle system by the Computer Centre team. Both e-learning platforms are supported by the NTUA Computer Centre.

Conclusion
Both e-learning courses focused on assessment and on autonomous learning have been developed to improve and upgrade the traditional language courses at the NTUA following the innovative teaching methods. The feedback received up to the moment is very encouraging.

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Keywords

E-learning, autonomous learning, on-line assessment, self evaluation, course design, LMS

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The Re-Evaluation of MFL Learners' Objectives in Re-Orientating Social Media Usage from Leisure Activities to Educational Purposes. Invasion or Invitation?

Abstract

Strong evidence shows that social networking tools and mobile technologies have been largely adopted by our students during their leisure time. A growing number of projects in CALL are examining the integration of these tools in the language classroom (Thorne & Payne, 2005). Although some CALL researchers and practitioners have highlighted the potential educational benefits of these social media with improved participation and increasing collaborative work (LLT, Vols 7-10), there remains an important need to assess the degrees of learners' satisfaction and appropriate usability in employing these social and leisure tools within a learning context (Sharpe, Benfield, Lessner & DeCicco, 2005). This study proposes to analyse the attitudes of undergraduate students and trainee teachers to gauge their resistance or acceptance in re-orientating social media for LL purposes.

Short Paper

Both the recent popularity of social media software as well as the growing exploitation of mobile technologies (Chinnery, 2006) in every day contexts have recently emerged as important areas of consideration for both researchers and practitioners in the field of CALL. Indeed, the inherent personalisation of these particular tools and communication spaces provide potentially alternative means for enhancing the language learning experience for individuals. As these generic tools are constantly being updated and developed, we can currently identify a number of helpful LL facilities which may be used for pedagogical purposes. For example, many students now have the possibility of downloading authentic SLA material onto multimedia phones or MP3 players for independent study (See 'Ipods and SLA' section below). In relation to social media, English originally dominated as the main operational language for users. However, recently localised sites are now emerging in various languages via MySpace (e.g., French, German, Spanish) and Bebo (French, German, Polish). Furthermore, the development of dedicated language learning applications (generic CALL widgets) which can be integrated into the user's personal space highlight their growing relevance for learners today. These include Facebook applications such as 'Word of the Day', newspaper widgets, RSS feeds, language exchange networks and language learning peer groups. If used correctly, these tools could potentially enrich the communication format of this particular environment, by facilitating communication via software such as Skype, blogs, and (multi-media) messaging.

Hence, this study aims to investigate how undergraduate students and trainee teachers regard the potential uses of these types of technology for SLA purposes. Incorporating a typical action research approach (McNiff & Lomax, 1996), a detailed qualitative analysis will be established in order to collate data from fourth year undergraduate and post-graduate MFL students registered at the University of Limerick. Using questionnaires, focus groups and one-to-one interviews, we shall look at the following themes:

- Students' general use of CALL in SLA
- Self-analysis of one's LL needs in CALL (personal goals and objectives)
- Existing social media practices and attitudes
- Tool/application/network preferences for SLA integration

- Establishment of realistic outcomes with regard to SLA input and output in the use of social media.

Indeed, the required re-evaluation of one's objectives from leisure activities to educational purposes reflects the complexity of this particular question. As these tools are non-dedicated by nature, the main issue lies in creating a meaningful context for their successful integration into a distinct language learning context. As such, the establishment of clear learning objectives within this complex space of diverging generic tools is an essential factor to underline, whether for integration within the traditional classroom or with a personalised autonomous LL environment. In fact, one of the main challenges lies in assessing whether or not students have the range of skills and motivations necessary for the successful exploitation of this technology into their SLA objectives.

Kenning informs us that: "It would be foolish to expect the use of L2 media to replicate either the use of media in the L2 community or an individual's use of L1 media. It would be equally foolish not to expect the use of media in the L2 community and personal media history to have some bearing on the use they make of L2 media" (2007: 54). This echoes an earlier statement from Levy and Stockwell: "Nor, in the broader sense, is it wise to ignore the technologies [that] students choose to use in the wider world" (2006: 30). They go on to proffer a term for this type of integration as 'horizontal integration' and emphasise that: "Knowledge of a student's experience in these non-CALL environments is important for CALL" (Ibid). In our paper, we aim to investigate these claims further. Initially, our own anecdotal evidence suggested that some students may be quite resistant to the appropriation of their seemingly private leisure domains for SLA purposes. We therefore decided to explore this evidence more thoroughly with an action research methodology and will present our findings accordingly. In exploring the evidence we wished to ascertain the possible degrees of resistance from students in re-orienting certain social media for LL purposes and – wisely, we hope – to inform CALL practitioners of the greater demands on them in convincing and motivating digital native students to re-evaluate and adapt social media to their LL goals. Are we invading "TheirSpace" at our own invitation?

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http://www.facebook.com/applications/Languages/2358422443
- Plans to make Facebook available in different languages
  http://www.insidefacebook.com/2007/08/06/coming-soon-facebook-in-your-language/
- France: http://fr.myspace.com/
- Germany: http://de.myspace.com/
- Spain: http://es.myspace.com/
- Bebo: German; French; Polish
- Facebook: French Word of the Day; French Newspapers; French Audio Word of the Day (300 words)

LLT: http://llt.msu.edu/vol9num3/emerging/default.html   Skype
http://llt.msu.edu/vol7num2/emerging/   Blogs and Wikis
http://llt.msu.edu/vol11num1/emerging/default.html   You tube
http://llt.msu.edu/vol2num1/emerging/index.html   Digital video
http://llt.msu.edu/vol10num1/emerging/default.html   MALL

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http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=999668
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Keywords

Social media, educational appropriateness, resistance, re-evaluation, integration, context of
use

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The Impact of Emergent Technologies on CALL Practice and Research: the Use of Blogs for Reflection in L2 Learning

Abstract

This paper discusses the use of blogs for L2 learning and CALL research. I will argue that emergent technologies change the role of the language learner and that blogging in particular supports learners to become more active participants in the learning process. The use of blogs as reflective journals builds on traditional learner journals and is extended by its social dimension. The public aspect of blogging fosters interaction between language learners and facilitates their involvement in the research process on L2 blogging.

Short Paper

In his recent article on Research and Technological Innovation in CALL, Levy (2007) draws attention to the difficulty of conducting research and establishing long-term research agendas in an environment of constant change. He stresses the importance of building CALL research on existing theoretical, pedagogical and curriculum frameworks to ensure a sound footing for the discipline.

Changes have always been a characteristic feature of CALL. Technologies change, educational theories associated with the use of technologies change and learner perceptions of technology change. Change comes with the discipline and it needs to be a defining feature of CALL research.

Emergent technologies might represent the most significant change that CALL has experienced. Blogs, podcasts and wikis, to name just a few, do not only supply valuable resources and communication networks for language learning, they most importantly enable users to become active participants of a learning community. Emergent technologies allow the shift from other-regulation (where the teacher and the technology define the learner activity) to self-regulation (where the learner develops the ability to adjust the technology to personal learning needs).

The involvement of the learner is not only an educational aim, it also impacts on curriculum design. In order for learner autonomy to develop, learners need to feel involved in the learning process. They need to understand the rationale of the activity and see the benefit for their personal learning situation. Their views on the perceived benefit for language learning should then be considered for improved adaptations of the chosen technology.

This paper is concerned with the use of blogs in language learning. It is informed by previous action research projects (by the author) that involved L2 blogging. It is also informed by real-life blogging practices. It further builds on theories in second language acquisition and attempts to prove that L2 blogging adds a new dimension to the established practice of L2 learner journals.

Used as online journals, blogs can be used for learners to reflect on class related topics, on their learning process and on the use of technology. The learners' reflections enable them to become more aware of their own learning and as informed participants of the research

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study they become responsible contributors.

With this in mind, I would like to discuss the effect of public self-reflection on L2 learning.

Diary studies have long been used to gain access to the verbal thought processes of L2 learners (Bailey, 1991). De Guerrero (2004) has shown from a sociocultural perspective that diary-keeping in the learners' L1 can help raise awareness of L2 inner speech and the learners' ability to 'think words' (Vygotsky, 1986) in the second language. Little (2007) argues that the use of the target language for metacognition and metalinguistic reflection can support the learner's capacity for inner speech. While diary-keeping is mostly conceived as a private task which involves only the learner and the teacher (or the researcher), there is some evidence that additional "public retrospection" (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 147) might assist L2 learners to develop their ability for self-reflection.

The aim of this paper is to investigate whether blogging (defined as interconnected reflective writing) lends itself to the creation of learning communities which support language learners in their ability to reflect on language and to think in the target language. The study will examine the effect of using learner blogs in an intermediate German language class and ask a) if the blog structure promotes a sense of togetherness amongst learners, b) if the learning community fosters a culture of self-reflection, c) if self-reflection in the TL positively impacts on learners' ability to think in German and d) how learners evaluate their general language development. Questions regarding these issues will be incorporated in the blogging activities and further clarification might be sought through individual or group interviews.

It is hoped that the results of this study will shed light on the benefits of practice-based CALL research and show that the use of blogs not only added a new dimension to L2 learner journals but that its integration with this study itself resulted in new insights for CALL research.

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Keywords

L2 blogging, learner journal, reflective writing, learner autonomy

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Collaborative Tandem Tasks for Synchronous Voice Communication

Abstract

This paper reports on a tandem exchange between Spanish speaking students learning English and English-speaking students learning Spanish at tertiary education level. A task based approach is used and communication takes place via Skype. We develop online tasks and evaluate them from two perspectives. We describe the impact of these online synchronous tasks on common hurdles in tandem exchanges: not knowing what to talk about, and conversation being purely descriptive offering few opportunities for pushing the learners´ interlanguage. We report on student motivation, sustainability and rates of participation to explore the first question, and we then present preliminary results of a qualitative study of transcripts of the communication that has taken place focusing on instances of negotiation of meaning.

Short Paper

One of the main challenges in language teaching is increasing learners' time of exposure and use of the target language (TL). In particular it is difficult to engage learners in communicative activities in the L2 when not supervised by the teacher (it is only understandable that students sharing an L1 will find it unnatural to interact in the L2 outside the foreign language classroom). This is a problem for face-to-face teaching given that contact hours are few and that there is often pressure from within the institution to rationalize student group numbers and time dedicated to a particular subject. Within a Distance Educational context it is even more imperative to provide learners with opportunities to communicate in the TL. Asynchronous written communication tools (e.g. E-mail, Forums) and synchronous written communication tools (e.g. MOOS, chat) have been widely used in an attempt to increase the amount of interactive use of the language by students. Even though some studies have found evidence that skills acquired in e-mail and even more so in chat can be transferred to oral skills in some occasions, the fact remains that these exchanges were clearly lacking an oral component.

Videoconferencing sessions have been used for telecollaboration, but the logistics of setting up these sessions have not allowed for extensive use of this tool for pair work. One of the most interesting recent technological developments in terms of opportunities for language learning is the widespread popularisation of peer to peer (P2P) based voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) applications. These services enable users to connect directly from their computer to the computers of other users of the same service. In general, the basic functionality of voice communication between computers is free of charge and increasingly popular. This type of synchronous oral communication finally provides tandem projects with the opportunity of free, easy contact with native speakers. However, synchronous voice communication has its own set of challenges. Factors such as shyness, anxiety and low willingness to communicate are more prominent in this environment given that students have less time to prepare and are required to provide an immediate reaction. Awkward moments of silence are more problematic in such an environment.

In this paper we report on a case study using synchronous oral communication within a tandem context. This case study is a development within a wider project on the use of Skype for carrying out tasks in tandem (Mullen et al. forthcoming). Early studies within this project

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piloted a number of task types with American students of Japanese and Japanese students of English. The present study involves a tandem exchange between native speakers of Spanish learning English and native speakers of English learning Spanish. We use the tasks that were designed as a result of the Mullen et al studies. These tasks have an emphasis on communication, are goal-oriented for both L1 speaker and L2 speaker at all times and make maximal exploitation of interaction with a native-speaker. This last point is particularly relevant when considering the difficulty level of the task: the difficulty level of a task for NNS-NNS interaction is not necessarily the same when a NS takes part in the task.

We report in this paper on a set of questions identical to those posed in the Mullen et al study related to student motivation, sustainability and rates of participation. We also analyze transcripts of the communication between students and report on the quality of this communication in terms of opportunity for language learning looking for instances of negotiation of meaning. We work within Robinson´s triadic componential framework for tasks.

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Keywords

Tandem, asynchronous communication, task design, CMC

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Some Rationale for Teaching Linguistic Netiquette in EFL Classroom

Abstract

The technological properties of computer-mediated communication (CMC) stimulated the development of electronic discourse, characterized by unique linguistic and iconographic features. These very properties have created a peculiar, uninhibited environment of virtual communication, particularly attractive for communicants with limited social and language proficiency. While benefits of CMC for learning English have been widely reported, the exposure of many non-native speakers to language peculiarities of electronic discourse has not yet attracted proper attention. The presentation seeks to provide the rationale for addressing the linguistic aspect of netiquette (etiquette for communication on the Net) in the EFL classroom.

Short Paper

The novel phenomenon of electronic discourse is currently an object of vigorous research and heated discussion in various areas of scientific inquiry.

While the detailed analysis of electronic discourse is beyond the objectives of this article, some of its discursive characteristics and the distinctive linguistic behaviour they generate directly relate to the foreign language teaching and therefore need to be addressed in this paper. It should be noted, that the conversational nature of CMC is manifested foremost in its immediacy and spontaneity, typical of oral interaction. Whether synchronously or asynchronously, the communicants take turns in writing and aim at quick exchange of usually short and informal messages. "Economy of writing" (Goodman & Graddol, 1996:120), whether driven by financial considerations of being online or the need to have a turn in the quickly progressing discussion, is one of the most prominent characteristics of electronic discourse. Combined with certain "linguistic relaxation" (Averianova, 2005) or casual language usage, more appropriate for oral than written speech, economy of writing leads to the extremely active and diverse abbreviation, curtailed syntax, non-normative use of upper and lower case letters, overall tolerance towards grammatical and spelling mistakes, and the need to render semiotically intonation, emphasis, mood and other prosodic attributes of the utterance. These unique linguistic traits of electronic discourse manifest its spoken, oral nature and form its distinct verbal culture. The innovative speech presents considerable deviation from the normative language usage and can create certain communication problems, such as lack of comprehensibility, exclusion, flaming etc. In order to ensure meaningful interaction and to keep interlocutors within the reasonable boundaries of polite and mutually respectful communication certain rules and conventions have evolved over the time. These regulations comprise netiquette, the linguistic aspect of which, as the author of this article contends, should be addressed in EFL curriculum.

Over the past ten years, computer mediated communication has become a global phenomenon, spanning over countries' borders and ethnic, cultural, and language barriers. With more than twenty percent of the world population involved in CMC (*About Computing and Technology*, 2006), the most common language of which is English, it is safe to estimate that a considerable number of communicants are non-native speakers of English. The enormous potential of the Internet for language teaching and learning is now widely recognized, with many teachers of EFL endorsing the comprehensive exposure of their students to unlimited resources which the new computer technologies and the Internet provide for research, learning and communication. However, there is one feature of CMC, which bears a particular attraction

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for non-native speakers of English: it is its tolerance towards spelling and grammar mistakes and freedom of expression and experimenting with the language. Non-native speakers, similar to all new users of the Internet, are particularly susceptible to the lures of linguistic relaxation and economy of writing and tend to overuse the linguistic means of these discursive drives of the electronic communication. We contend that as long as CMC is used in teaching English as a foreign language, this issue should be addressed in the EFL classroom. Besides the general guidelines of the appropriate use of the medium and introduction to the ethical norms of electronic communication, which are included in the most of netiquette compilations, teachers of EFL need to explain to their students the linguistic conventions of electronic discourse and the communicative effects of their correct or inappropriate usage.

There are different approaches of addressing the linguistic aspect of netiquette in the classroom without interfering with authenticity and privacy of electronic communication. The research into TEFL practices shows, however, that while adequate attention is paid to the technicalities of CMC, language peculiarities of electronic discourse and relevant netiquette regulations are generally either not acknowledged or intentionally neglected. Disputing this attitude, it seems necessary to emphasize that if the comprehensive language competence is the objective of EFL teaching, than electronic discourse, as an aspect of this competence, should be the subject matter of the English language instruction. While there is no comparative study yet on the relationship of linguistic netiquette awareness and foreign language acquisition, one can hardly argue that computer-mediated communication generates new kinds of texts, and it rests with the EFL instructors to teach students to create and evaluate these texts effectively.

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Keywords

Electronic discourse, netiquette, computer-mediated communication

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The Right Choice of CMC for Cross-Cultural Communication

Abstract

In the field of foreign language and cross-cultural communication teaching, CMC allows direct contact to native speakers. Different course designs based on CMC have been tried to create interaction opportunities to develop Intercultural Communication Competence. However, the distance between students or groups remains and thus the communication process has changed. Therefore before selecting a methodology suited to the communication tool, this condition of distance should be taken into account. In this paper, I compare two different methodologies used for room videoconferencing and discuss the importance of applying an original CMC approach, which includes the distance, and sets interactions in a clear framework.

Short Paper

One major result of the introduction of CMC into foreign language teaching was to open the class and let native speakers communicate with learners. This occurred at a convenient time when teachers found helpful theory concerning communication, learner-oriented and autonomous learning methodologies. With respect to culture and cross-cultural communication, teachers had to change their approach because CMC opened the door to the social and cultural reality of the target language. After using teaching books and social or cultural studies to explain and teach cross-cultural communication, teachers could at last design courses with authentic speakers of the target cultural background. The problem is that this reality was often unexpected; it looked, talked and behaved differently to the expectations conjured up in teaching books or cultural studies.

Therefore it was necessary to adopt an ethnomethodological approach, in which learners became searchers, able to investigate on their own the culture of the target language by compiling and conducting interviews. The ICT is also used to record and store products and data which can be analyzed by learners themselves. They are no longer taught who is or could be the "other" but can develop intercultural communication competence (ICC).

In my contribution, I would like to compare two of those methodologies, *ethnographic interviewing* and *Cultura*, both of which are applied in CMC cross-cultural communication course design. Here, I aim to focus on the importance of creating or applying methodologies which are original CMC (like Cultura) and not just adapting methodologies which were developed for face-to-face communication (like *ethnographic interviewing*).

To discuss this issue, I compare two cross-cultural communication experiences, both of which use room videoconferencing. I chose this medium as it has the advantage of allowing students to talk to and see each other at the same time, making it very similar to face-to-face communication.

On the one hand, I refer to the American-German partnership conducted by O'Dowd, published in 2005. The second experiment is based on my own experience of a French-German partnership, conducted in the winter semesters 06/07 and 07/08. Both have many similar features:

1. Only the German group of the partnership has to speak in the target language, as the Americans and French neither attend a language course nor speak German.
2. Both have 4 videoconferencing sessions.
3. Different semester dates.

What separates these two experiences is that:

- The German-American exchange adapted a face-to-face methodology, i.e. ethnographic interviewing;
- The German-French exchange adapted Cultura, which is an original asynchronous CMC methodology, to a synchronous room-videoconferencing supported form of communication.

The main difference is that the latter considers the distance at the beginning and as part of the situation of communication and teaching. Because the methodology chosen for the former was not created for long-distance communication, O'Dowd makes the point that the German students could not develop ICC because they were not able to "*to identify the cultural context which gives meaning to people's beliefs and actions*" in the exchange with the other group. This causes O'Dowd to make generalizations about "*German speakers*" behavior in his conclusion, which is actually the opposite of the kind of result which the use of CMC may lead to. In contrast, the Cultura approach encompasses time and distance. Moreover, the use of videoconferencing cannot lead to general statements, neither from students nor from the instructor. In a constant co-construction of the subject they study, and in the practice of their common learning with the Cultura tools, learners gradually become an investigative community within the framework of the CMC. This community of practice can be seen and observed and can reflect on its own learning.

Keywords

Cross-cultural, Videoconferencing, Interaction

Bio Data

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Katia Carraro

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Impact of Lab Technology on Language Teaching Practice in Higher Education

Abstract

This paper will describe the ways in which two recently renovated language teaching labs have been used, and in particular to what extent technology has become an "invisible" and "truly integrated" (Bax, 2003: 13) element in the teaching practice at our university. An ethnographic research approach has been adopted, and the data collected include observation of classes, informal conversations and interviews with teachers and questionnaires. The data gathered offer interesting insights into the reasons that motivate teachers to choose certain technologies instead of others, and into the factors that determine the setting of 'trends' in the use of technologies.

Short Paper

Over the past two years, two language teaching labs at the University of Economics and Business Administration underwent radical modernization. One of the primary concerns for the planners was that, despite being equipped with the latest technology, the new learning environment should clearly put the human being in the centre of the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the labs were designed so that they can accommodate different teaching styles and levels of integration of technology.

The furniture chosen makes it possible to 'hide' monitors in the desks when they are not needed and thereby "allow for an easy move from CALL activities to non-CALL activities." (Chambers and Bax, 2006: 470). In this way, when computers are not required by the learners, monitors do not interfere with communication between the teacher and the learners and amongst learners. This also facilitates the alternation between a variety of activities within the same class, some of which including traditional face-to-face interaction, others computer-mediated learning. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to integrate CALL-based activities into their language classes when these are relevant.

Chambers and Bax (2006: 466) stress the importance of a correct understanding of the variety of factors that can influence the integration of CALL in a language teaching context. A successful integration of technology not only depends on the choice of the right equipment, but also on a complex interrelation and integration of different aspects, which all need to be attended to. Four main issues need to be taken into consideration when working towards the normalisation of CALL (Chambers and Bax 2006: 477-8): logistics; stakeholders' conceptions, knowledge and abilities; syllabus and software integration; training, development and support.

This paper will describe the ways in which the two teaching labs have been used by teachers over the past two years, and in particular to what extent technology can be seen as having become an "invisible" and "truly integrated" (Bax, 2003: 13) element in their teaching practice. An ethnographic research approach has been adopted and the data collected include observation of classes, informal conversations and interviews with teachers and questionnaires. The author also acted as a full participant in the study as a planner of the teaching labs, as a teacher trainer and as a teacher.

As noticed by Chambers and Bax (2006: 469), particularly data gathered during open interviews with teachers offer interesting insights into the reasons that motivate them to

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choose certain technologies instead of others, and into the factors that determine the setting of 'trends' in the use of technologies. As expected, the ease of use plays an important role, in particular for teachers who are not very experienced in the use of computers and technology. However, there is also strong evidence that other factors, like the meaningfulness of activities that are enabled by a new technology, or the wish to emulate other colleagues, or the pressure to keep up with students' expectations, can result in a powerful motivational drive towards the integration of technology, irrespective of the complexity involved.

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Keywords

Qualitative study, integration of technology, normalisation of CALL

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Howard Chen

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Developing Statistic-based and Rule-based Grammar Checkers for Chinese ESL Learners

Abstract

Many ESL students need to improve writing skills to pass various tests. However, the existing automatic e-raters cannot provide satisfactory help. In this paper, we introduce a hybrid approach which integrates both rule-based and statistic-based grammar checkers. The preliminary experimental results showed that the integration of two complementary grammar checkers can detect more errors and provide richer feedback. Although the new system can outperform Microsoft Word and several commercial grammar checkers, its rule coverage, accuracy of locating errors, and feedback quality could be further improved. Careful analyses of learner errors and effective error annotations should help to enhance the performance of this checking system.

Short Paper

More and more ESL students need to improve writing skills to pass various language tests. Thus, writing teachers would need to grade many compositions and provide feedback. To help teachers reduce their teaching loads and to give students faster feedback, some commercial automatic essay raters are available (e.g., Criterion and My Access). The feedback from Criterion and My Access users indicated that these tools can assign proper scores to ESL students at different proficiency levels. However, these tools often cannot provide satisfactory help on grammar errors (cf. Chen, 2007). There is a pressing need to develop better writing tools to provide feedback on ESL writers' grammar errors.

There are several different approaches to develop grammar checkers. Each different approach has different strengths and weaknesses (Naber, 2003). In this paper, we introduce a hybrid approach which utilizes both rule-based grammar checker and statistic-based grammar checker. The hybrid system for Chinese ESL learners can detect more errors and also provide richer feedback because it combines the strengths of these two complementary approaches. For the rule-based checker, we adopted a grammar authoring tool to design a checker for Chinese ESL learners. Based on the one million words Chinese Learner English Corpus, we extracted common error patterns of Chinese ESL learners and add in various rules to capture learners' writing errors. Although the rule-based checker performed well for many types of errors, it still failed to detect several types of errors (e.g., collocational and lexical errors). We thus also developed a statistic-based checker to deal with the errors which cannot be captured by the rule-based checker.

The statistic-based checker used the ngram language models generated by SRI (Stanford Research Institute) Language Model Toolkit. The ngrams (bigram and trigrams) were extracted from a large native English corpus (British National Corpus) and stored in a large database. The statistic-based ngram checker can quickly check students' essays and highlight the word strings that are not found in the native corpus.

This grammar checking system which integrated two types of grammar checkers was empirically tested with various Chinese ESL learners' errors. This grammar checking system could outperform Microsoft Word and several commercial grammar checkers. The preliminary

experimental results clearly showed that the integration of two complementary grammar checkers was indeed beneficial for second language learners.

Although this hybrid grammar checking system can identify more errors in learners' writings, it still has much room for improvement. For the rule-based checker, it is necessary to develop more grammar rules to cover different types of errors. For the statistic-based checker, the accuracy of highlighting errors should be further improved because the ngram checking mechanisms sometimes cannot underline the "right" word(s) like the ways writing teachers would mark. In addition, providing proper feedback and explanations on various bigrams and trigrams found in learners' writings was a rather difficult task. Because there are so many types of bigram and trigram errors, it is difficult to provide proper feedback for various types of bigrams and trigrams.

Given the complexities and diversities of learner errors, it is not easy to improve the feedback quality of this grammar checking system. However, based on our experiences in developing these tools, more careful analyses of learner errors and effective error annotations can improve the performance of this grammar checking system.

Keywords

Grammar checker, Natural language processing, learner corpus

Bio Data

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Developing SynctoLearn, an Automatic Video and Script Synchronization Tool, for Language Learners

Abstract

There are many English video clips available on the Internet, but most of these video clips do not have captions. If captions can be added to videos, students might understand the content better and pick up more vocabulary items. To help students to make better use of authentic videos, we developed an automatic video and scripts synchronization system called SynctoLearn.   The SynctoLearn system uses speech recognition technologies and it can automatically synchronize videos and scripts.   Based on our survey results, ESL students indicated that they enjoyed watching synchronized videos.   Students also felt more comfortable and confident with the support of captioned videos. The same technologies can be used to synchronize various videos and scripts to help more language learners.

Short Paper

Authentic video clips on the Internet are now widely used to help students develop better language competence. Although there are many interesting and exciting video clips available, most of these authentic video clips on the Internet do not have captions. Without captions and other supporting tools, intermediate level learners often have great difficulties in using these authentic videos because of the fast speed and many unknown vocabulary items. If captions can be added to these videos, students are more likely to understand the content better and pick up more new vocabulary items. However, manual synchronization of these videos and scripts would be a difficult and time-consuming task.

To help language teachers and students to make better use of a wide variety of authentic videos, we developed an automatic video and script synchronization system called SynctoLearn. To develop a prototype of SynctoLearn, we used videos and scripts from VOA (Voice of America) web site. This automatic synchronization system was developed mainly with the help of speech recognition technologies. The automatic synchronization system was trained with VOA video and scripts. A tri-phone acoustic model of the VOA news was first built up. Then the HTK (Hidden Markov Model Toolkit) of Cambridge University was used to run the force alignment procedure. Through the alignment procedure, we have time-stamped VOA videos. With the help of this automatic synchronization system, anyone can upload any VOA video and script into a server and the SynctoLearn system can automatically synchronize videos with scripts.

In addition to the core automatic synchronization engine, some other useful options of viewing VOA videos were also provided. When students watch the video, the scripts automatically synchronize with the audios/videos by default. Nevertheless, students can also choose to turn off the captions (synchronized texts) and just watch the videos. This option can encourage students not to rely on the scripts. After students' listening abilities reach a higher level, they can turn on the captions only when they need help. In addition, because the videos and scripts are time-stamped, students can click on any words shown in the script and the video will be (re)played from that specific word. The convenient playback function can help them quickly capture what they missed in the video viewing process. These options might be useful for vocabulary learning and listening comprehension.

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Based on the survey results from two groups of ESL students who used this system for several weeks, students enjoyed watching the synchronized video clips generated by SynctoLearn. Most students felt more comfortable and confident with the support of this synchronization tool. In addition, students indicated that they have more opportunities to learn the new words and their pronunciations. With the captions, they can better understand the video content.

Based on the encouraging results of using SynctoLearn on VOA videos, we can further extend the learning content to other types of videos and scripts. There are more and more video clips and scripts available on the Internet and these materials can be synchronized automatically with the same technologies. Similar synchronization technologies can be adapted to process video and texts in other different languages. It is expected that the automatic synchronization system can help more language learners improve their listening abilities and learn more vocabulary items.

Keywords

Listening, video, automatic synchronization

Bio Data

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Designing Telecollaboration for Fostering Meetings in Intercultural Learning Context: towards a General Framework Beyond Cultural Variability?

Abstract

Our study is based on three practical experiences of Intercultural Exolingual Exchanges in Group at a Distance (IEEGD), in institutional contexts, relying each on the same two workspaces, a blog and an audio-graphic conference system, and on collaboration in small groups (three to four students). The systematic analysis of our data after each experiment has contributed to improve our pedagogical scenario and to question Byram's model of intercultural competence. Variations of languages and culture contexts between the first two sessions of the Tridem course and the current Ecofralin project contribute to a better understanding of the nature of online intercultural learning out of which a general framework for implementing IEEGD situations may be designed.

Short Paper

The objective of our study is to define what we have called "Intercultural Exolingual Exchanges in Group at a Distance" (IEEGD), in particular the elements of its specificity in terms of pedagogical aim and educational research, based on three practical experiments conducted since 2005. An IEEGD is a situation in which groups of learners living in different countries are involved, at a distance, in collaborative tasks, including exolingual exchanges, with intercultural aims. This definition highlights the fact that cultural phenomena are not just one kind of parameters among others to be considered in language learning, but that the intercultural competence (IC) is a major stake of these exolingual exchanges.

We consider skills, attitudes, beliefs and values, such as "involvement" and "openness to the other", which give authenticity to the act of "meeting the other", and may be analysed as markers of acquisition of IC. Our conception of the pedagogical framework for intercultural learning is based on previous researches such as the Cultura project (Fustenberg & Levet 2001), which takes into account the many facets of the culture concept (individual, relative, contested), and tandem learning projects (Lewis & Walker 2003), which focused on the nature of the relationship between participants (reciprocity, mutual scaffolding and autonomy). "Meeting the other" comes along through collaborative work between speakers of two different languages and cultures, expecting each partner to take risks, assuming positions in her/his own culture (self culture awareness) and discovering or facing the culture of the other (other culture awareness) (Kramsch 1993).

Based on these research findings, our conception of IEEGD was implemented in a first series of two experiments (Tridem05 and Tridem06), during 10 and 12 weeks respectively, where students of French at Carnegie Mellon University, USA, adult learners of French at the Open University, UK, and native French speakers studying English at the Université de Franche-Comté, France, have been gathered to accomplish collaborative intercultural tasks. One learner of every institution was grouped in, what we call, a "tridem". An original pedagogical scenario was designed in order to foster intercultural contact and communication. The intercultural meeting occurred in two workspaces: one for written asynchronous communication (blog) and one for oral communication in an AGSE (audio-graphic synchronous environment) (Audras & Chanier 2007). After Tridem05, the pedagogical scenario has been modified from conversations on personal topics (Audras & Chanier, 2006) to the experiment of the five steps

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of Byram's model (1997) (*savoirs, savoir-comprendre, savoir apprendre/faire, savoir être, savoir s'engager*), by the investigation of one single topic among three possibilities ("identity/identité", "freedom/liberté", or "diversity/diversité"). Participants were then asked to position themselves *individually* and *socially* (see Figure 1).
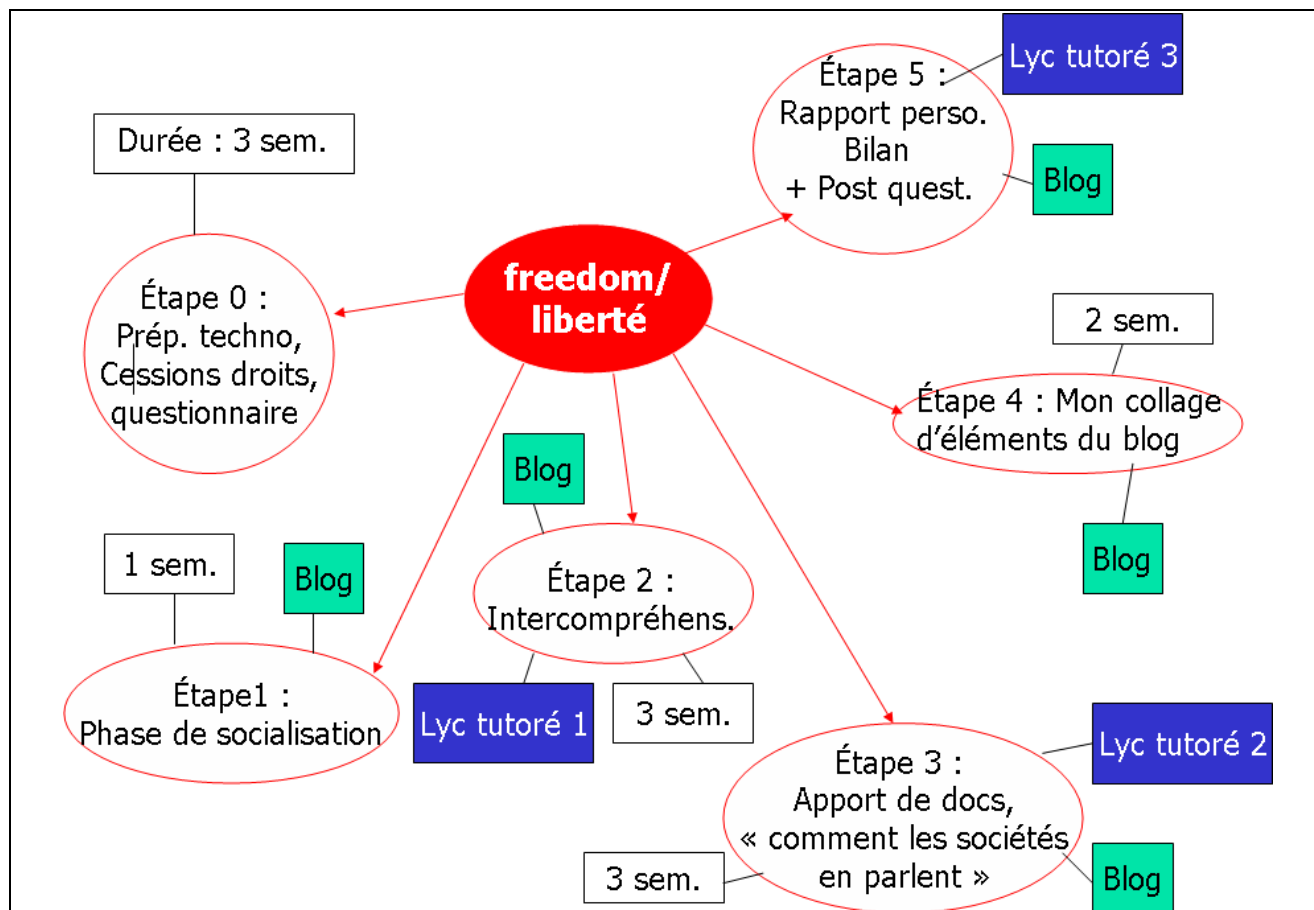

Figure 1: Example of intercultural learning scenario, « freedom/liberté »

This second pedagogical scenario places a new emphasis on the ability to acknowledge and integrate cultural otherness and to handle intercultural communication. Whereas many research projects have focused on *interpersonal communication*, our scenario rather integrates a *group dimension* to scaffold the intercultural communication strategies. All interactions have been recorded. An original coding for multimodal interactions has been used to transcribe the oral synchronous meetings.

Our methodological approach is double. On the one hand, it is quantitative and involves learner's participation in AEGSE (audio, textchat, concept map, whiteboard and word processing), and in tridems' blogs. It concerns the language use according to the communication medium and the steps of Byram's model. On the other hand, it is qualitative and focuses on the complexity of the IC through the way members of tridems experienced the different steps of the pedagogical scenario. The order of the different steps, the schedule of the training, and the choice of the communication media are analysed in terms of their impact on the IC development.

After these two years of practice and analysis, we then conceived an overview of a 3-tiered model of communication competence in IEEGD (see figure 2). The first tier, the *online communication competence*, focuses on the nature and characteristics of online

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communication, specifically on the tutor communicative competences, such as the ability to adapt oneself according to different groups and contexts. The second tier, the *intercultural competence*, aims at the development of critical cultural awareness and follows the steps of the model already mentioned. These steps are observed here in exchanges of multilingual, multicultural and multi-institutional groups. The third tier, the *multilingual competence*, aims at the development of positive attitudes towards multilingual communicative strategies.
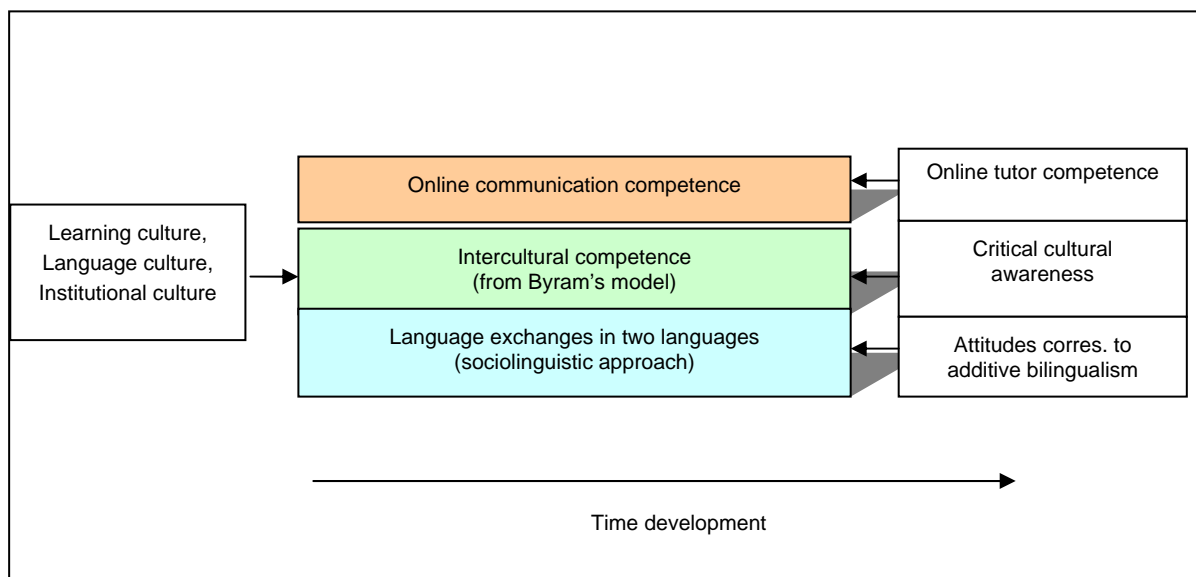

Figure 2: The intercultural speaker in IEEGD situation

Thus, semiotic and pragmatic aspects of intercultural communication are important, as it goes far beyond the realms of language alone. Indeed, the intercultural communication combines the concepts of communication and interculturality (phenomenon involved in intercultural contact). It describes the problems and pitfalls of misunderstanding, and skills and competences required for successfully understanding members of other cultures.

In 2007, in order to confront our model to other languages and culture contexts, we designed and implemented a new intercultural training (ECOFRALIN), involving pre-service French teachers from the Universidad Libre, Bogotá Colombia, and the Université de Franche-Comté, France.

In the light of our experiments, as practitioner and researcher, we will show how the systematisation of our approach, in terms of pedagogical design and research design, contributes to shape a coherent set of data to contribute to a better understanding of the nature of online intercultural learning out of which a general framework for implementing IEEGD situations may be designed.

Keywords

Telecollaboration, exolingual exchanges, intercultural competence acquisition, pedagogical design, research design

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the semiotics of multimodal environments and cultural practises related to their use, and Mediation of learning and teaching in Internet-based settings.

Thierry Chanier is professor at the Université de Franche-Comté, France. His main domain of research over the 20 past years has been CALL. Online learning or teaching situations represent his current domain of interest.

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Online Enhanced Corrective Feedback (OECF) for ESL Learners in Higher Education

Abstract

This study investigates the value of OECF for non-native speakers (NNSs) of English from (1) the quality of their interaction online, (2) their perceptions and (3) the challenges encountered. OECF is an online peer tutoring (PT) technique that was developed from Negotiated Meaning (NM) and used by native speakers (NSs) for eight weeks. Conversation Analysis (CA) was employed to evaluate the quality of NNSs' online conversations. Participants' opinions on the project were measured using an end-project survey.

Short Paper

Foreign students are an increasing minority and vital to many western Universities especially those in UK, USA, and Canada. They are important because they are a major source of revenue (Furnham, 2004). When joining these Universities, a large number of international students experience culture shock (Furnham, 2004). This negative feeling grow out of the difficulties in understanding and assimilating the new culture. Very often, at the core of these problems lie poor language skills. In fact international students, who experience culture shock, have problems in (1) using their second language (SL) to communicate, (2) deciphering unfamiliar sounds of the SL while spoken, (3) understanding academic expectations and (4) socializing with NSs of the target language (TL).

Though most Universities provide English language support services via the Language Centres, these are supplied within a teacher-led kind of environment where students take little responsibility for their own learning (Graesser & Person, 1994). They are also provided in a structured format that "...can be synonym for mindless drill and practice, leading only to short-term rote learning –certainly measurable, but of doubtful value." (Topping, 1998). The pragmatic spirit of such institutions usually pre-determines students' attitude toward how they should be learning a language. Sadly enough, long hours are spent on the course work and quasi no time left to socialize with NS of English; a vital context for them to not only learn the TL (Jepsen, 2005) but also become socially balanced happy and confident (Beasley, 1997). This supports the argument that social interaction is essential to language learning (LL) as has been shown by studies of (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000); (Lantolf, 2000); (Long, 1983); (Long, 1996); (Pica, 1994) in the communicative approach to language teaching.

Given these facts, it is worth investigating the value of OECF as a useful PT provision for international students to develop their language skills and at the same time experience a successful and healthy sojourn in the hosting country while studying for their academic courses. This programme is structured yet very flexible. It entails the use of (1) NS as peer tutors, and (2) Internet as a means of social interaction. This PT pedagogical methodology underpins (Vygotsky, 1978) approach where competent learners scaffold weaker ones and help their progression through the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Online interactive tools like e-mails and online chats provide very practical ways of communication these days. Therefore, NSs would appreciate using these tools as they would feel flexible about when and where they need to assist their peers. This would also be a convenient and pleasant means of interaction for NNSs as they would practise their English through typing rather than speaking; with no fear of being embarrassed or loosing face when producing mistakes.

OECF of this study adopted few strategies from Negotiated Meaning (NM), which is one of the main components of Interactional Theories deemed conducive to LL (Long, 1980). As an aspect of social interaction, NM is a cognitive process where interlocutors tend to understand each other better because of modified interaction (Long, 1996); (Pica, 1994). This latter as defined by (Long, 1983) is partly accomplished through utterances like, clarification requests and comprehension checks. NM is used to increase comprehensibility between two interlocutors and ultimately raise awareness on grammatical and semantic inaccuracies. It is usually manifested through repair moves (Ellis, 1995). When interlocutors recognize the various types of these repair moves, they may attempt to self-correct or generate modified output (Swain, 1985). It is in this sense that NM is found to be appropriate to the design of OECF technique of this study. NSs, as tutors, while using this PT system are expected to be highly conscious about NNSs' language and react accordingly. NNSs' language in this instance includes grammatical inaccuracies as well as cultural misconceptions due to differences in backgrounds. The OECF uses implicit and explicit strategies.

In order to explore effectively the value of OECF for ESL learners, both qualitative and quantitative tools were used. The two main instruments were Conversation Analysis (CA) and end-project survey for both NNSs and NSs. The analysis of data obtained from both these tools was substantiated with relevant extracts from participants' spontaneous turns produced during their online conversations.

The CA was used to investigate the quality of NNSs' discourse while conversing online with their NS peers. This methodology was not applied in a mechanistic fashion as in linguistics. It was applied essentially to encapsulate the perspective of interaction as action which is expressed by means of linguistic forms in a developing sequence (Seedhouse, 2005)

To get insights on the value of OECF from the NNSs and NSs' perspectives, a survey was developed. It was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. This was used to gauge NNSs' perspectives and attitudes. They indicated their level of satisfaction by ranking the question from 1 to 5 (5 is the highest score).

The findings of the present study would appear to support the value of OECF for ESL learners despite the problems encountered. Results of CA clearly show that NNSs were actively involved in processing English either through reading what was written to them and answering accordingly or through expanding their interlanguages while committed in nurturing and keeping their conversations going with their allocated peer tutors. CA also shows the benefits of OECF when it is used to raise the awareness of NS tutees on the gaps they had in their interlanguages. This PT programme, according to participants' opinions, appears either to be a very pleasant way to practise the TL or meet different people. Suggested solutions for the problems encountered would sum up in first setting up a face-to-face training session and a social get-together before the project commences. These meetings would surely prepare the participants to approach the project with a clear informed mind set. The second point would be to get the Language Centre integrate this PT programme as part of the curriculum.

Keywords

Peer tutoring, ESL learning, computer-mediated communication, negotiated meaning

Bio Data

Rayenne Dekhinet is nearly completing her PhD in the Department of Education at the University of Dundee in Scotland. Her PhD is on Technology for Peer Assisted Language Learning (TPALL). Her background is in Second Language Education. Her experience in teaching and learning foreign languages led to her current research interest which is the use of

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ICT tools to connect people of different backgrounds for the purpose to learn each others' languages. Rayenne designed, managed and coordinated three international projects. She has also managed an in campus project which has been described in this paper.

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The A-CALL Questionnaire: an Empirically Based and Psychometrically Validated Instrument to Measure the Attitude towards Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Abstract

This research describes the process of the development of an empirically-based and psychometrically-sound instrument to measure the attitude towards computer-assisted learning and, more specifically, towards computer-assisted language learning. The results show a clear validity and reliability of the questionnaire and several subscales. A second aim of this study is the construction of a broader psychological model of constructs and factors influencing users' attitude towards CALL and CAL. We found some interesting influences from cognitive, affective or behavioural components on attitude towards computer-assisted (language) learning.

Short Paper

In the last decade, the use of ICT in language learning has progressed and evolved in a remarkable way and CALL (computer-assisted language learning) has become a fully-fledged research field (Desmet, 2006). It is important that the effectiveness of CALL is studied since CALL applications are already implemented in many classrooms or language labs. Recently, some 'state of the art' studies were published that give a critical overview of research and practice in CALL in recent years, such as the work of Levy and Stockwell (2006), Felix (2005), Beatty (2003) or Chambers and Davies (2001).

Notwithstanding the increasing interest in CALL research as such, only few studies take into account the individual differences between learners using an electronic learning environment. Chapelle (2003) distinguishes three types of research in CALL, with respectively a focus on software, the learners and the learning task. Most of research in computer-assisted learning focuses on software. The strength of this research is the focus on the learners and their attitudes towards CALL. Personal attitudes are a major factor to affect individual usage of information technology, and the understanding of users' (learners and/or teachers) attitudes facilitates the creation of appropriate CALL-applications for teaching and learning (Liaw, Huang, & Chen, 2007; Desmet, 2007).

What this study distinguishes from other is its focus on the operational definition of the concept 'attitude towards CALL' and the quality of this definition. This in combination with the positioning of attitude as an influencing construct (e.g. on learning outcome, effective use of new technologies) and a construct that is influenced by other factors (e.g. cognitions, beliefs, general attitude towards computers). Several researchers tried to define and validate the construct of attitude, and for most of them the attitudes can be decomposed into three major components: cognitive, affective and behavioral (Liaw, 2002; Smith, 1971). And although the concept of attitude towards computers has gained recognition as a critical factor in the use and acceptance of information technologies, there is no single, clear-defined definition of computer attitude construct (Liaw et al., 2002). What is clear to all researchers is that positive attitudes towards language learning can raise learners' motivation and help language learning (Merisuo-Storm, 2007). Also, as individuals' attitudes on e-learning and computer-based learning become more positive, they will have greater behavioral intention to use it (Liaw et al., 2007). But, as Laurillard (2001) states, more and more we need to drop the naïve belief in the surplus

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value of new technologies in learning, simply because there is a large discrepancy between the questions asked in evaluation studies in new technology, and the often predictable conclusions they come to.

The aim of this study is twofold: first, based on several components of which attitudes are composed of, we try to validate the construct of attitude towards CALL and Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL). This leads to the conceptualization and development of a questionnaire. Previous research about measuring the attitude toward CALL, CAL or e-learning only used basic statistical analysis (like regression analysis, exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis) to validate or confirm the questionnaires that were developed (Ayres, 2002; Keller & Cernerud, 2002; Mishra & Panda, 2007). The major advantage of the first part of this study is that a combination of basic and advanced statistical techniques (e.g. confirmatory factor analysis) have been used in order to validate the constructs developed.

A second aim of the study is the construction of a broader psychological model of constructs and factors influencing users' attitude towards CALL and CAL. Again, models are tested with the more advanced technique of structural equation modeling, rather than stepwise linear regression. The model that is tested in this study is partly based on the model of Gardner and colleagues (Gardner, 2005; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Also a reference is made to the Technology Acceptance Model, a popular approach for surveying user attitudes towards information technologies (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warsaw, 1989). This model suggests that two specific behavioral beliefs, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, determine an individual's behavioral intention to use technologies.

The 240 participants in this study consisted of students and employees with different gradations of education. The majority of participants used a computer mainly for their work or at least equally between work and private use. Almost all participants had at least a basic notion of a second and third language. One fourth of all participants had previous experience with computer-assisted (language) learning. All participants completed a set of questions, representing several constructs like attitude towards CAL, towards language learning and towards CALL. The attitude-related items were related to the three components discussed before: the cognitive component, the affective/evaluative component and the behavioral/personality component.

A four-step strategy was used to investigate the construct validity of the questionnaires. First, the descriptive statistics, the internal consistency and Pearson intercorrelations were computed per subscale on the entire sample. Second, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the entire sample, trying to identify and corroborate the three underlying components of attitude. In a third step, the sample was randomly split into a calibration sample ($n_1 = 120$) and a validation sample ($n_2 = 120$). The calibration sample data were used to validate and confirm the factor structure by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The second subsample, the validation sample, was used to cross-validate the solution obtained with the calibration sample. In a fourth and last step, we again investigated the reliability and validity of the remaining items in the A-CALL by computing descriptive statistics, the internal consistency and Pearson intercorrelations per subscale on the entire sample.

The questionnaire and model here developed will help teaching institutions to identify and manage learner profiles. These profiles will be based on learners' positive and negative attitudes and motivation to use computer-assisted techniques in (language) learning. As attitudes can change over time it is possible to change any negative bias towards CAL and CALL by offering a clear communication, training possibilities or moments of experience.

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Keywords

Survey research, validated questionnaire, learners' attitudes and perception, motivation, computer-assisted language learning, confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modelling

Bio Data

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From Research to Practice: Designing Online/Multimedia Occupational Courses for European Certification

Abstract

Mobility is a key objective of the European political agenda, so knowing foreign languages is of major importance. Based on guidelines from (1) the European catalogue of occupations and levels of language command, (2) national documents regulating educational needs in foreign languages within occupational contexts, and, (3) needs analysis of the actual competence and requirements of target groups of professionals in our region (Commerce and Tourism Services), we are designing web supported multimedia courses in English, French, Portuguese and Italian to meet European standards, under the research project entitled "The Creation of On-line/Multimedia Courses for Professional Certification and European Equivalency Recognition in Languages for Occupational Purposes", funded by the regional government of Extremadura in south-western Spain.

Short Paper

Introduction
Mobility is a key objective on Europe's political agenda, with the purpose of motivating people to go abroad, hold a job or continue their education. To achieve this, knowing foreign languages is of major importance. The Division of Language Policy in the Council of Europe has established a modular catalogue of occupations and respective levels of language competency to meet the demands required of working professionals in the European Union. The aim is to provide a reference framework of guidelines guaranteeing language skills leading to certification recognized throughout the EU. Based on this catalogue and working documents regulating the educational needs in foreign languages in the EU in occupational contexts, we have developed the research project entitled "The Creation of On-line/Multimedia Courses for Professional Certification and European Equivalency Recognition in Languages for Occupational Purposes" funded by the regional government of Extremadura in south-western Spain. The objective is the creation of web supported (Moodle) multimedia courses in languages to obtain professional certification on a European level in English, French, Portuguese or Italian in two selected sectors of regional interest, namely, Commerce and Tourism Services. We have applied what we consider the most appropriate tools and learning objects to reach the goal of formative education in these foreign languages and sustain that the challenge of language learning and training for European Equivalency Certification can be enhanced by the application of ICT.

Research: Foreign Language Equivalency Certification in European Occupations
ICT language learning and training for European equivalency certification offer a series of advantages: 1) unification criteria regarding the requirements and characteristics expected of the current European labour force in the command of foreign languages; 2) establishment of a methodological base by defining an instrumental model for identifying FL competence within professional profiles; 3) laying foundations for professional recognition while making allowances for particular regional and social demands; 4) regulating validation which recognizes work experience by law and official accreditation; 5) facilitating technical design, learner content, and measurable assessment of educational programs, and; 6) promoting job mobility within the EU member states.

Thus, our project emerged from the need to create foreign language courses for specific contexts according to the demands of the European Union and the regional government of Extremadura (Spain). In the process, several documents were analyzed:

- Common European Framework for Languages;
- Report by the Spanish National Institute of Qualifications (INCUAL);
- Draft of Royal Decree 27/03/2006, regulating the system of professional education for employment. Projected implementation 2013; and,
- Study by Spain's National Institute of Employment on Educational Needs in Foreign Languages of the EU within Occupational Contexts.

Based on these documents, and on the regional government's demand for the need to learn foreign languages in the service sector, polls were conducted in five cities of touristic importance regarded as representative in specific foreign language learning. We present the data and results obtained from field research undertaken during high season (spring 2007) to determine the local language needs in the area of commerce and tourism for two common unskilled labour positions: waiter/waitress and salesperson.

Most of the interviewees considered foreign language learning "recommendable" and "requisite" (figure 1), and they stated that they required English, Portuguese, French and Italian (figure 2).

Figure 1: importance of learning foreign languages
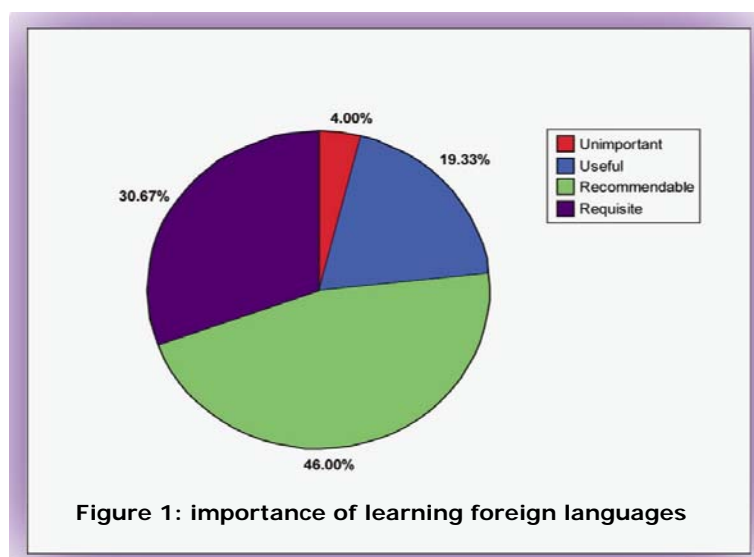
Course formats and contents

Two online language learning courses targeting the required A1 and A2 basic user levels of FL competence marked by EU guidelines for commercial salespeople and waiters/waitresses and bartenders have been elaborated.

The courses are available in two formats: 1) multimedia CD-ROM, and, 2) Moodle virtual learning management platform. Each level contains four units outlining the programme contents in their respective linguistic skills and components.

Each unit consists of a series of scenes that gradually introduce the programme through oral and written comprehension of texts, grammatical and vocabulary annexes, and attractive cultural information.

Presentation scenes are followed by sets of learning tasks, exercises and activities linked to scenes with multimedia tools.

Figure 2: Foreign languages required
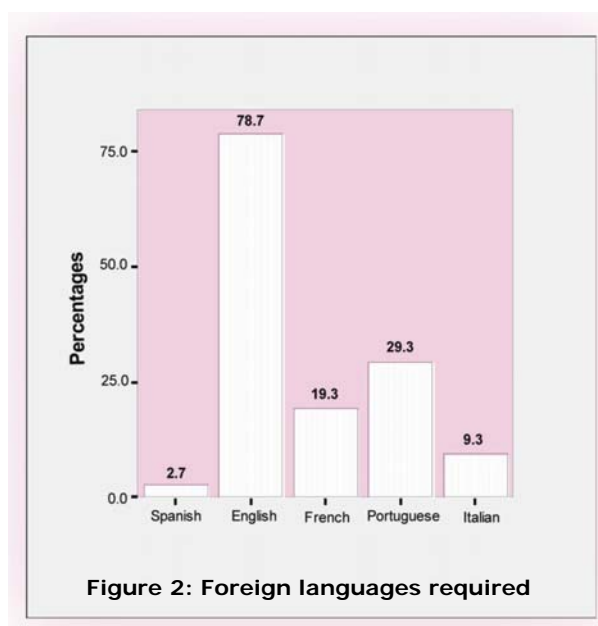
ICT tools and activities

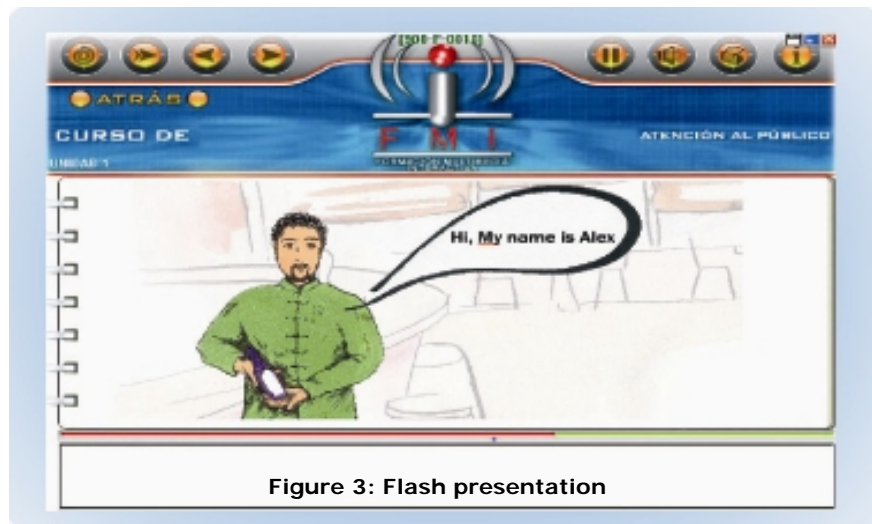CD-ROM courses are designed with the FMI (Formación Multimedia Interactiva) authoring tool, an interactive exercise management system programmed to create static and dynamic content with flash (texts, images, audio and video), in order to generate evaluation activities and to access links and hypertexts.

Figure 3: Flash presentation

The courses created with the Moodle platform incorporate all the linguistic components and skills to ensure the learning process of languages online. We subscribe to a methodological approach that includes tasks for individualized learning of micro skills (pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, oral and written competence) through exercises built with tools like HotPotatoes and exposure to theoretical contents and socio-cultural information through PDF documents, Word, OpenOffice, Powerpoint etc.

In addition to individualized, autonomous tasks, the design of collaborative ones allows for group work and interaction through activities such as building electronic glossaries, participation in wikis, educational online workshops, chats and forums. Oral interaction, either individually or collectively, is carried out with Moodle's oral messenger (MoodleSpeex voice recording tool), podcasts, audio and video files, and interactive tools such as chats or phone calls through suppliers like Skype.

Furthermore, the inclusion of multimedia filters permits the incorporation of images, sounds, and audio and video files.

Figure 4: Video

The flow of communication with peers and the teacher is essential for oral skills. The platform can be enriched with a basic tool for audio production and immediate access to the interface wherein the student generates audio materials enabling the sharing of files with fellow users or for teacher assessment. In addition, video animation with Flash facilitates simulations of real life situations and the re-creation of space and familiar environs.

Concluding remarks

It seems reasonable to assume that the design of courses which adhere to EU certification guidelines denoting levels of command can successfully lead to recognition of competency in all of the member states given the promising features available in multimedia and Moodle

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coupled with the creation of FL preparation online for European language competence for professional purposes. Along these lines, this research actively promotes the online acquisition of foreign languages as convened by the stipulated outlines of minimal competency levels for specific occupations as listed in the European Union Directory.

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Keywords

Research, multimedia courses, CALL, moodle, EU certification

Bio Data

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The Imperfect(ive) Avatar: Training Russian Verbal Aspect Through CALL

Abstract

A major problem in teaching Russian verbal aspect is that students cannot see the implications of the aspectual choice via realistic feedback. We propose training students by providing feedback in the form of a graphical environment. Students will view an avatar (a graphical extension of the user) who is subject to the directional commands of the user, and by whose actions the student can immediately see the consequences of any given verbal choice.

Short Paper

In 'real' language situations, learners are rarely told 'Well done!" or "Try again." They encounter feedback, usually without realising it, when their efforts are greeted with a shrug of incomprehension, the request to repeat the utterance, or the right (or wrong) outcome of the transaction or request. This is the ideal type of feedback, and one which enables the learner more rapid acquisition of language patterns. This is what is meant by 'intrinsic' feedback, and seems to us to represent a more satisfactory match to constructivist learning approaches.[1]

Verbal aspect and verbs of motion represent, for many students and teachers of Russian, the pinnacle of grammatical challenge in the language. Not only are these topics somewhat difficult for students (particularly native English speakers) to grasp on a conceptual level, but they are also difficult to train. Since aspectual choice depends wholly on context, it is insufficient to offer students a few models, provide them with a list of 'cue' words for imperfective or perfective, and expect them to master the concept. Frequently, we find that students' real understanding of aspect only occurs after intensive study in-country, where students have the luxury of seeing thousands of real-time examples played out before them, as well as the opportunity to experiment with their ability to properly use verbal aspect with native speakers through authentic day-to-day interactions.

A major problem in teaching aspect is that students cannot visualize the implications of the aspectual choice via realistic feedback; thus, no learning takes place beyond the examples given. In other words, the student can parrot the use of verbal aspectual pairs, but cannot duplicate proper aspectual choice in a different verb pair which nevertheless behaves similarly. In addition, students do not have a general understanding of the morphemes involved. Might there be some way to better train aspect before the student goes abroad in which a sole user, working in concert with an online system, can approach a situational environment where there are real consequences to language choices?

We propose training students via an online module which provides intrinsic feedback in the form of a graphical environment. This would function in a manner similar to the way in we teach verbs of motion, where the classroom is made active and a set of students provides direction, while a second set of students acts out the commands, moving to specified,

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[1] Paul Bangs. "Engaging the learner – how to author for best feedback." Uschi Felix, ed. *Language Learning Online: Towards Best Practice*. Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger B.V., 2003, 83.

imaginary destinations represented by various points in the room. In our conception, students will manipulate the environment through an avatar (a graphical extension of the user) who is subject to the directional commands of the user, and by whose actions the student can immediately see the consequences of any given verbal choice. For example, consider how a student would begin using the program to train verbs of motion. First, he or she contemplates the avatar at rest, centered on the screen.   Various destinations are presented, and the student can direct the avatar's movement by building basic sentences, during the creation of which the student selects the base verb and any prefixes. Once these commands are entered, the avatar moves as the student has directed. If the movement is contrary to the student's objective, the process can be restarted. Ideally, the program would also work in reverse: the avatar's movement can be shown, and the student queried on how to best represent that movement in the target language.

There exist sites which attempt to train the student in the underlying, theoretical decision-making process required to correctly choose the proper aspect ; however, in our view they do not provide an environment for the student to experiment and *see the outcome of that* experimentation. Our resulting program provides the student with a testing environment in which feedback features provide guidance, mistakes can be made without consequence, and the language can truly be explored by the user. Graphical representation of movement using prefixed verbs of motion is instantly comprehensible, truer to authentic language use and much less cumbersome than a textual explanation.

Keywords

Russian, verbal aspect, CALL

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Anticipating Washback in a Computer Based University Entrance Examination: Key Issues

Abstract

The way in examinations influence teaching and learning is called washback. This study examined the attitudes of 100 teachers towards the computerization of English section of the Spanish University Entrance Examination paying special attention to the nature and scope of these changes, and the constraints and benefits. A 10 item questionnaire and 2 sessions with a focus group were used to obtain the data. The paper concludes that although regarded as positive, this change would require additional resources for materials for the schools and the pertinent teacher training.

Short Paper

Washback is the effect that the processes and tasks of a foreign language test have in the teaching and learning towards that exam. The washback effect encompasses how teachers and students accommodate their learning skills, content and strategies to the test and how different teaching strategies can be used to enhance the teaching and learning processes in order to attain better scores. Wasback is a central element when changing a traditional pen-and-paper test into a computer based test. This is partly, because of the very same nature of the new context students need to adapt to new learning styles (Toperoff, 1997). As it has been reflected in current literature, teacher training in ICT depends on a number of variables such as the age, familiarity with computers, and many other influential issues (Drent & Meelissen, 2008). Some of these aspects could be observed as relevant in a research that addressed the importance of computerizing the test. In this project, data were collected through a survey and focus group interviews in a two month period. 100 teachers who are currently teaching for the English section of University Entrance Examination (Prueba de acceso a la Universidad, PAU) which is the largest high-stakes examination in Spain, attended a 30 minutes presentation about the new test form and were asked to suggest possible ways in which this test could change their daily teaching and the effects on their students' learning. A qualitative 10 item questionnaire was distributed and completed. After this first part of the research, a 20 teacher focus group was organized. This group took the 2007 PAU exam personally, and expressed their thoughts and concerns about the new format. This paper will show some of the relevant aspects of their responses.

From the traditional PAU to the IB PAU project

The PAU is considered the most important test for most high school leavers in Spain because its record can determine what studies the student will pursue in university. For instance, a prospective medical doctor student may be required to be in the top 20% of the test passers. That means that students and teachers usually emphasize the skills and strategies that are absolutely necessary to succeed in the test. This is to the point that in not very few occasions the official national curriculum is neglected, and some contents stressed instead. This effect is known as negative washback (Prodromou, 1985). Thus, teachers are eager to learn and even vary their teaching styles if the change is expected to have an impact in the students' final grade. However, this may result in students failing to achieve the competence level that is presupposed after their high school years (a B1 in European Framework).

According to García Laborda (2006) and García Laborda & Gimeno Sanz (in press) new test contexts (we refer context here in the same way as Weir, 2005) may vary the possibilities of

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developing new test items and tasks or even integrating new skills that have not been in use until now (for instance, speaking due to the high cost of delivering personalized oral exams for up to 10,000 students every year). According to the same authors and the results of the TSE research and experience, the IB PAU can integrate oral items that enhance the reliability of the final score in relation to the students' knowledge. In the case of including oral skills in the test, this would imply that teachers would have to strength its importance in the classroom and ultimately devote more time to speaking than they do now. Therefore, what is really important is to get to know if teachers would be reluctant to change their ways and how their classes would be.

How did teachers differ in their perceptions?
In order to order the issue, the researchers differentiated two main aspects in the teachers' responses: a) the implications for the test and its reliability (would the test measure the students' overall proficiency?), and b) the effect in each teacher as a knowledge and strategy facilitator or trainer (would the teacher have to change and learn to do new things), and, in that case, what the implications in language learning would be expected.

Teachers are expected to move students towards the mastery of a second language but if this wish would contradict with the importance of the score in the PAU, teachers need to decide whether score should or should not prevail over learning. Thus, many of the respondents acknowledged that they intentionally jeopardized language learning to favour strategy development towards the test. In fact that means, if constructing sentences using reported speech are likely to be included in the test, should the students learn the strategies and mechanics of sentence building or understand when and how to use reported speech. While the first possibility seems more profitable, the second seems worthier for the student's future. In fact, IB PAU would challenge this position because new types of items would be included both in the language use and also writing or speaking. Given the inclusion of similar tasks across several skills, most respondents answered the current point of view that score prevails over learning (although, according to Rothman, & Iverson, 2007] and Krashen's [1987] even controlled form based instruction should lead to learning) but this would necessarily change and, as a consequence, students would really have to internalize the foreign language structures incurring in better learning and diminishing their anxiety towards the test and the use of technology. This idea was also strengthened by the focus groups who acknowledged that the test would greatly benefit from the inclusion of new skills. In relation to the classroom changes, teachers recognised that major changes would be necessary and new classroom schema would be necessary. Most of them also recognised that it could be difficult to change or adapt to the new situation. They also believed that that although most schools have some hardware equipment, it would need to be updated but this technological improvement would result in better learning. Teachers who acknowledged more computer literacy also showed more prone to undertake the necessary changes in order to benefit their student's learning (Saif, 2006).

Findings and conclusions
According to the analysis of the responses obtained in the research, some suggestions seem advisable if a change into a computer based test is to be done in a near future:

* The Inclusion of all oral and written skills will benefit both language and strategic learning,
* Identifying and including certain language aspects in the test will facilitate and organise the appropriate training for the teachers,
* The inclusion of new computer skills will benefit in language learning but also in means that are not currently associated to language learning in high school such as typing or computer usage,
* Emphasize items that may represent language proficiency or communicative competence may certainly overcome the limitations of paying special interest to just the ability to transform the language or strategic competence to cope with the different items.

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Overall, the changes were considered positively towards foreign language learning and testing but further research in some aspects is still necessary.

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Keywords

Testing, washback, classroom practice, qualitative, teachers

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Does it Pay to Invest in Computer Based Testing Technology? Realities to Implement an Internet Based University Entrance Examination (iB PAU)

Abstract

The University entrance examination (PAU) is the most important high-stakes exam in the General educational system in Spain. It has 6 sections of which the Foreign Language one is very relevant to the final score. The English section has had almost not significant changes in the last 20 years despite all the research in language learning and language testing in that time. Recent Spanish research projects suggest that there is a possibility to computerize the English (and the rest) sections of the University Entrance National Examination. Computer assisted language testing (CALT) seems an interesting possibility to improve its format, face validity and make it more reliable for all the different stake holders (students, teachers, institutions and so). Because of technical and administrative issues, students need to move to the universities (and, in not few cases, that mean very long distances) to take the exam. Thus, the key matter is whether it is possible to implement CALT in schools instead of universities to make it more accessible and less stressing for most students, and also to include a new test format to strengthen the exam validity. In order to study the deficiencies, a survey was completed by 100 teachers and then some of them participated in three focus groups. The study concluded that it is possible to implement CALT in high schools but requires an institutional and personal effort for both teachers and students. The survey also pointed that the computer version could include tasks that, at the moment, are not done due to the high price of their inclusion (such as an oral section).

Short Paper

Introduction
Today, most high school leavers need to sit the University Entrance Examination (PAU) [the most important high-stakes test in secondary education in Spain] at universities instead of their own schools. It seems self evident that when students take the test, they would feel more at ease in the school where they attend their classes rather than in a cold college where they have never been before. According to Weir (2005), setting is one of the most significant factors in language testing (Wall & Horak, 2007). A familiar setting reduces anxiety (Phillips, 1988). Additionally, a local setting facilitates the delivery of the test because it allows students to remain in their schools instead of moving to the larger city colleges where discomfort due to the unknown setting is usually clear. However, the researchers of the sponsored Spanish Ministry research project (HUM2007-66479-C02-01) to computerize the PAU believe that the current state of technology in Spanish schools is not yet sufficient to allow for delivery of the test online in the schools themselves. This opinion is based on the fact that although the Ministry made a huge effort to update many schools technologically in the early 2000's, usually public schools lack the resources for the necessary maintenance. Besides, school boards consider that computers, scanners, digital cameras, and other technology in schools in an atmosphere of violence (as it is recognized today in many regional educational boards) and lack of respect (Traver Martí, 2006) deserve limited funds which may be necessary for different purposes. This paper reviews current research on technology for its use for high stakes language testing in local school and intends to show the conditions under which computers could be used for the PAU positively.

Technology in the foreign language testing

Spanish schools do not have a tradition for testing through computers. In fact, although schools usually have computer programs for language learning, language teachers have neither the desirable number nor a possibility to implement CALL as they may desire since computer laboratories are usually limited to computer classes. Additionally, it should be considered that this lack of possibilities has limited the language teachers' skills as computer users in educational settings, and, as a consequence, they feel their limitations. Thus, when teachers use computers for language learning, they tend to use it as a "driller". That means they just limit themselves to control the class while the computer software (or Internet) delivers exercises. Lately, teachers have begun to use computers to gather information (especially cultural information) but the students have limited opportunities for communicative interactions (except for some keypal projects or occasional synchronous or asynchronous communication activities), which is one of the major features in online language testing.

Testing with computers

CALT differs from CALL in various aspects. Some of them relate to technology (García Laborda, 2007a; Chapelle & Douglas, 2006; Chapelle, Jamieson & Hegelheimer, 2003) or interface design (García Laborda, 2007b; Fulcher, 2004) and some have been addressed by studies by Roever (2001). There have also been claims that students who use e-learning methodologies score better than their counterparts without them (Butzin, 2000; Mann, Shakeshaft, Becker & Kottkamp, 1999). TSE has done a large number of studies suggesting the benefits of computer and Internet based testing. However, very few studies have addressed the situation in national compulsory tests. There are two main differences between TOEFL and national examinations: a) the proficiency level; and b) motivation. In general, TOEFL examinees who have to go through important changes in the way they work: they have to adapt to new interfaces, new keyboards and they are generally familiarized with the necessary computer skills to approach the test. However, students in national compulsory examinations are the core students and their motivation may be limited to just passing the test. Additionally, they have not usually taken specific classes to face the test other than those attended in the school. Thus their opportunities are much more limited to achieve a good grade than those who have extensive training (as in TOEFL). Since much of the current research has been done with highly motivated students or teachers with certain interests in showing the benefits of CALT, it is difficult to know of the so far claimed benefits would actually affect to all the students in a compulsory test (which, in the end, is the most common case). Thus, "rigor is important for all studies…to avoid weaknesses that have plagued much of the literature to date" (Egbert, 2005: 19).

Learning about CALT from the teachers' experience

In order to research the relationship between CALT and teachers' expectations, 100 Valencian teachers answered a questionnaire which was followed by focus groups organized by Macmillan-Heinemann Iberica. According to the questionnaire, teachers believe that their schools do not meet what they consider necessary in technology, time and space to prepare their students for the IB PAU as most schools are right now. According to the focus group meetings, the following changes could be necessary:

a) Improving and updating the schools' hardware especially in classes other than the computer labs. Teachers believe that foreign classroom with computers should also have the traditional class setting,

b) Access should be improved in certain areas. Although most schools have computers in their libraries, they cannot be accessed at the students' convenience (discipline in many Spanish schools makes it impossible),

c) Preparing teachers and students for the change. For many teachers, their training would be an essential part of the change but they have limited time and teacher training and education does not bring along an increase in their salary. For many teachers, their students' ability with computers is limited to information gathering and

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computer playing but teachers are reluctant to believe that students may be able to cope with the new situation in a test,
d) Finding , most favorable, where computers can be strictly used for academics and the software really leads to learning and not to just "students' amusement", and
e) Time and hope, teachers need to have the time to adapt themselves to the new situation and a strong will to believe that the change is possible.

Conclusion

The small research addressed in this paper is still far from being a reference point about the possibilities of CALT implementation in Valencia (Spain). However, it shows that technology is possible but requires dramatic changes in schools since students and teachers will have to change. Computers can improve the quality of language (and other subjects) assessment and learning but institutional and personal efforts are necessary. Thus, is the change worthwhile? Who is going to take the first step?

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Keywords

Testing, attitudes, classroom practice, qualitative, innovation

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Is Text-to-Speech (TTS) Synthesis Ready for Use in CALL?

Abstract

Many potential uses and benefits of the use of TTS synthesis in CALL have been put forward, in particular benefits which add value to CALL, i.e. bring new possibilities to CALL. Yet, the use of TTS synthesis in CALL is not widely accepted. We believe this is because it has not been adequately evaluated for the purposes of CALL. In response to this, we present an evaluation of the adequacy of a range of French TTS synthesis systems with respect to their use in the three roles TTS synthesis can assume in CALL: reading machine, pronunciation model and conversational partner.

Short Paper

In very simple terms, speech synthesis is the process of making the computer talk. Text-To-Speech (TTS) synthesis is a specific type of speech synthesis which takes raw text as input and aims to mimic the human process of reading. As such, TTS synthesis offers another means of providing spoken language input to the learner in CALL environments. Indeed many potential uses of TTS synthesis in CALL have been put forward: talking dictionaries, talking texts, talking word processors, pronunciation models, conversational partner, etc. The use of TTS synthesis in these applications is thought to bring a number of benefits: ease of creation and editing of speech examples, generation of various kinds of modified input, generation of speech models and feedback on demand, etc. Yet, the use of speech synthesis in CALL is not widely accepted (Sobkowiak, 1998; Egan and LaRocca, 2000), and only a few applications have found their way onto the market.

We believe that this is because it has not been adequately evaluated for the purposes of CALL. Only five formal evaluations have been conducted (Stratil et al., 1987a, 1987b; Cohen 1993; Santiago-Oriola, 1999; Hincks, 2002). These have only looked at the use of TTS synthesis in two of the in which it has been suggested it could be used in CALL, namely as a reading machine and a pronunciation model. Yet, it has also been suggested that TTS synthesis could be used to provide the voice of a conversational partner in interactive dialogues. Evaluation of TTS synthesis in this role and the role of a pronunciation model is particularly important because these are new roles for TTS synthesis; outside CALL TTS synthesis is only used as a reading machine. Moreover, only 4 TTS systems have been evaluated. Yet, every speech synthesiser to be used in CALL should undergo evaluation because the quality of output of different speech synthesisers differs greatly (Huang et *al.*, 2001).

According to Handley (2005), CALL applications integrating TTS synthesis should go through 6 stages of evaluation:

- *Basic research evaluation* An evaluation of the viability and potential benefits of the use of TTS synthesis in the intended CALL application.
- *Technology evaluation* An evaluation of the extent to which TTS synthesis meets the requirements of the intended CALL application.
- *Judgemental evaluation of the application* An evaluation of the potential of the CALL application to provide conditions which promote Second Language Acquisition (SLA).
- *Judgemental evaluation of the teacher planned activity* An evaluation of the potential of the teacher-planned activity to provide conditions which promote SLA.

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- *Usage evaluation of the teacher planned activity* An evaluation of learners' performance in the teacher-planned activity.
- *Program evaluation* An evaluation of the success of the funding program.

In our opinion, only the first stage, basic research evaluation, has been adequately addressed. In this paper, we aim to redress the inadequacy of previous technology evaluations. Specifically, we present an evaluation of the adequacy of a range of state of the art French TTS synthesis systems for use in CALL in the three roles identified by Handley and Hamel (2005), namely (1) reading machine, (2) pronunciation model, and (3) conversational partner. The goals of this evaluation are formative in nature, that is, where the TTS synthesis systems evaluated are not meeting the requirements that CALL uses impose on them, the evaluation aims to provide recommendations on how they can be improved in order to meet these requirements (Hirschman and Thompson, 1996). The independent variables were acceptability, adequacy and the requirements established by Handley and Hamel (2005), namely: comprehensibility, accuracy, naturalness, register and expressiveness. Acceptability was intended to get at the minimal level of acceptance. That is the level of acceptance for applications which are not possible without TTS synthesis. And, adequacy was intended to get at the top line of acceptance. That is the level of acceptance for applications which could use digital recording of native speakers instead of TTS synthesis.

The results of this study suggested that one out of the four TTS synthesis systems evaluated was reaching levels of acceptance for use in CALL applications where it adds value, i.e. where its unique ability to generate speech models on demand is exploited. In order to fully meet the requirements of CALL the following aspects of the quality of the output of this system require attention: accuracy and naturalness, in particular at the prosodic level, and expressiveness. These are also the aspects of the quality of the output of the other TTS synthesis systems evaluated which require most attention. These systems, however, were not meeting the requirements imposed on comprehensibility. Regarding the different roles that TTS synthesis can play in CALL applications, while one of the systems was found to be most acceptable for use as a reading machine, another was found to be most acceptable for use a pronunciation model, and the remaining two systems were found to be most acceptable for use as a conversational partner.

In conclusion, while positive, these results emphasize the importance of evaluating every TTS synthesis systems for every role in which it is intended to be used in CALL.

Keywords

Evaluation, speech synthesis, text-to-speech synthesis, speech-enabled CALL

Bio Data

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Providing Distance Language Learners with Tutor-Less Speaking Practice via a Synchronous Audiographic Conferencing Tool

Abstract

This paper describes a pilot project being conducted at the Open University of Catalonia aimed at providing distance EFL learners with real-time speaking practice. Due to the unfeasibility of scheduling tutor-led sessions, carefully structured speaking tasks were developed which did not require the presence of the tutor and which were to be used by small groups communicating via a synchronous audiographic conferencing tool. The details of the study will be presented, along with the preliminary project evaluation based on the results of a satisfaction questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with the participants, and transcriptions of the online sessions.

Short Paper

Introduction

Traditionally, distance language learning models have been based chiefly on self-study materials, in the form of books, cassettes, videotapes, and more recently, multimedia software packages. Although some distance language courses offer learners the possibility of attending periodic face-to-face tutorials to improve their oral communication skills, in general, distance language learners are provided with few opportunities to practice speaking (Felix, 2004; White, 2006). According to Wang and Sun (2001), "a fatal deficiency in distance education for second languages has been an incapacity to expose learners to spontaneous speaking activities." (p. 554)

In order to overcome this, distance language learning programs have begun to implement online synchronous audio conferencing (i.e., the use of Voice over IP (VoIP) technologies) to enable language learners to speak to and hear their teachers and/or other learners in real time. These environments may be audio only or more technologically sophisticated synchronous audiographic conferencing (SAC) systems, which in addition to voice transmission have text chat features and allow for the displaying of visuals.

Various authors claim that SAC environments lend themselves well to teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction and collaboration (Chun & Plass, 2000; Erben, 1999; Wong & Fauverge, 1999; Zähner et al., 2000). Highlighting the potential for learning, Hampel and Stickler (2005) assert that, "language tutorials via the Internet can offer the chance to participate in live synchronous written and spoken interaction with peers and tutors who provide scaffolding for learning to take place." (p. 312) Moreover, many SAC platforms have built-in recording features, allowing students to play back sessions, self-evaluate their performance, and reflect on their learning (Levy & Kennedy, 2004).

Context of the study

This project grew out of a need to provide EFL learners enrolled at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC), a totally online distance-learning institution, with real-time speaking practice. For most of the degrees at the UOC, students are required to pass three compulsory subjects in English language, which are designed to take learners from level B1.2 to B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students are assigned to a virtual classroom

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with a tutor, who is responsible for guiding them through the various units in the self-study materials, moderating asynchronous written discussions in the classroom forum, providing learners with relevant feedback, and assessing their progress in the course. Although students receive some oral practice in the self-study materials, mainly in the form of pronunciation and dialogue practice exercises, speaking is currently not a main focus of the courses (for more details, see Ros i Solé & Hopkins, 2007).

This situation, however, will soon change as real-time speaking is scheduled to be implemented into the courses as of September 2009. This is an exciting new development for the university, although at the same time it poses a number of challenges from an organizational perspective. For one, tutors at the UOC have an average of 60 students per class, a situation which is unlikely to change drastically in the near future due to budgetary restrictions. Large groups such as these would be extremely difficult to manage in a SAC environment and students would not have much opportunity to engage in speaking practice. Dividing the students into smaller tutor-led conversation groups would also be problematic as this would go beyond what could be reasonably expected from tutors under their current contracts. In addition, distance learners have varying schedules and therefore require flexibility. It would therefore be impossible to find a time for synchronous sessions that would be suitable for all.

The study
With the aforementioned challenges in mind, a pilot study is being carried out in order to shed light on the following research question:

By means of carefully structured speaking tasks, can SAC environments be used effectively for small group work, in terms of student satisfaction and actual language learning, without the simultaneous presence of the tutor?

The SAC tool chosen for the study is FlashMeeting (www.flashmeeting.com), which is being developed by the Knowledge Management Institute of the British Open University. Along with voice transmission, FlashMeeting incorporates various other features, such as text chat, a whiteboard, video capabilities, URL sharing, and an automatic recording feature, which allows both students and teachers to replay the sessions.

Various collaborative speaking tasks were developed following Wang's (2007) modified version of Chapelle's (2001) criteria for CALL task appropriateness. These tasks were designed for groups of three to four learners and were carefully structured so that the tutor's presence in the SAC session was not necessary.

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The phases of the study are as follows:

Induction	In groups of up to 12, students receive training on how to use the FlashMeeting conferencing tool. These sessions are tutor led.
Group formation	Students are asked to form groups of 3 or 4 depending on their availability to meet synchronously with their fellow classmates.
Practice	Students are provided with two collaborative tasks which they can use to practice speaking with the other members of their group. These tasks are optional and not assessed. They are not tutor led. When groups have finished a task, they notify their tutor so that he/she can review the recording and provide them with feedback.
Assessment	Students are provided with a third collaborative task. This task is compulsory and is assessed. It is not tutor led. When groups have finished this task, they notify their tutor so that he/she can review the recording to assess individual student's performance to provide them with feedback.

Evaluation

The following methods will be used to evaluate the experience:

- Satisfaction questionnaire sent out to students.

- Semi-structured interviews with teachers and selected learners.

- Transcripts of various SAC sessions will be analyzed using a conversation analysis approach (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Psathas, 1995; Ten Have, 1999; Wooffitt, 2005).

Conclusion

This paper will present the preliminary results of this study. It is hoped that these will be relevant not only to distance language learning programs, but also to all language professionals who might be considering utilizing online synchronous audio conferencing in their teaching.

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Keywords

Distance language learning, oral skills, computer-mediated communication, synchronous audiographic conferencing

Bio Data

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Debra Hoven

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Social software and the individual-community dilemma: Practising research-based course design

Abstract

The last several years have seen a proliferation in the use of social networking software applications and use in both personal and educational settings. While these tools are often acclaimed as a useful online alternative to face-to-face (f2f) interaction and community formation, in practice, a proportion of students in distance and open learning environments demonstrate resistance to the use of these tools. This presentation will explore the compromises necessary in developing a fully online CALL teacher education course, incorporating social software, that can cater for the range of personality types and cultural backgrounds of internationally distributed learners.

Short Paper

Through an action research study, this paper discusses the research-based rationale behind decisions taken in the design of a fully online masters course in technology for language teaching by distance. In taking an ecological view of radical social constructivism in the framing of the pedagogical framework of this course (Davis & Sumara, 2002), social networking software affords the emergence of some major departures from traditional modes of distance teaching and learning. Taken together with research into social and emotional presence online (O'Regan, 2003), a picture emerges of disruptive influences for change.

Previous research (Hoven, 2006; 2007) into the social networking tools that are selected by MEd TESOL/TFL students in a blended environment has shown that software that provides learners with a sense of ownership of space, such as blogs, Flickr, or Facebook, are preferred over more public spaces such as wikis, and that personality plays a strong role in the extent and intensity of learner participation in, and contribution to the learning communities so created.

As Anderson (2005) defines it, social software designed or re-purposed for educational purposes comprises "networked tools that support and encourage individuals to learn together while retaining individual control over their time, space, presence, activity, identity and relationship." It is these affordances of social networking software that facilitate learner creation of knowledge and understanding. In other words, it is only now with this kind of software that provides for the creation of shared spaces, and the collaborative construction of knowledge, that we can really talk about educational approaches that are learning-centred … rather than teacher-/teaching- or technology-centred or driven. Just as, through dialogue, language learners are able to generate new, unique utterances which create meaning in new ways, so also can learners using social networking software, collaboratively create new, unique knowledge, processes and perspectives.

However, students who deliberately choose to take a distance education course, traditionally have been individuals who prefer to work alone and whose personality-type pre-disposes them towards more independent learning styles. When faced with the requirement in a distance language teacher education course of working collaboratively with others, it could be foreseen that these students could become uncomfortable and resist. This study shows evidence that this is what occurred. Distance education students also traditionally expect to have all the course requirements specified prior to commencement, in order that they can reasonably allocate their time and other commitments to maximize the possibility of success in a course.

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However, with the introduction of social networking software and associated interdependence, these students found that their previous methods of planning and organization no longer applied. This recognition introduced unacceptable levels of anxiety for some learners, resulting in questions to the instructor, complaints, and, at the extreme end, withdrawal from the course.

Observations that emerged from this experience overall focused on the mismatch across several dimensions, namely: program and course requirements at the Masters level, assessment criteria, student expectations, instructor expectations, and personality and learning styles. Examples of specific questions arising from these mismatches included: to what extent can and should we specify "participation", and should it be assessed as a discrete course component; and to what extent is extroversion as a personality trait implicated in good language teaching & how applicable is this in a fully distance context?

Conclusions and future directions
As this project is still under development and trial, the outcomes to date raise more questions than they answer. In addition to the action research study detailed here, some further complications are being added as a result of a university-wide push to internationalize the curriculum. Some critical questions that are still to be adequately addressed therefore include:

- to what extent can/should we be pressuring students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds to conform to predominantly "western" approaches to teaching and learning, when this may never be their aim or target teaching scenario?
- to what extent can/should we be pushing students out of their personality comfort zones when research also tells us that teachers teach best when they are comfortable and experienced with the techniques they are using.

These and other related questions will be opened to the room for exploration and discussion at the end of this presentation.

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Keywords

Social software, distance education, learning communities, intercultural

Bio Data

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Characterizing Theory in Computer Assisted Language Learning

Abstract

While the past quarter century has seen active development in CALL practice and research, development of CALL theory has been limited by comparison. Following a brief review of the role of theory in CALL to date, this paper offers a classification of theory for the field based on a continuum ranging from atheoretical CALL to construction of native CALL theories. Two of the intervening categories of theory development processes—theory adaptation and synthesis—are highlighted as areas of particular value. The paper concludes with a proposal for a theoretical framework characterizing technology as a central mediator in communication and learning.

Short Paper

CALL has existed as an identifiable field for over 25 years, and while considerable attention has been given to CALL research and practice, the development of CALL theory during this time has been much more limited. In the theory chapter of their recent book, Levy and Stockwell (2006) observe that "With rare exceptions, CALL designers and language teachers are predominantly in the role of consumers as far as theory is concerned. For those in this group who see value in theory (and it must be said that not all do), they review, select, and apply theories of language learning produced by others" (p. 139). There is evidence both to support their claim and to suggest that it can be extended to the domain of CALL researchers well. In a recent study by this writer on the use of the word *theory* in *CALICO Journal* articles (Xxxxx, in press), out of 244 articles in which the word *theory* appeared only a single one was identified (Oller, 1996) that included a clearly labeled CALL theory rather than a passing reference to or an extension of an existing theory from a related field. While there may be a handful of other articles that have such a theory (e.g., White (2005) for online language learning), there is little question that work in CALL to date has been largely derivative. At a time when Web 2.0, mobile computing, and other emerging technologies promise to present researchers, developers, and teachers with additional new frontiers to explore, there is a need to address the question of whether there is something unique about CALL that can be captured in at a theoretical level in a more unified fashion than has so far been the case.

In a conference with the theme of practice-based and practice-oriented CALL research, it may seem out of place to bring in the topic of theory. Yet, I believe it not only appropriate but vital to begin addressing this topic if CALL is to continue as a separate discipline rather than be fully subsumed under SLA or education theories or "normalized" out of existence (Bax, 2003). This paper begins by briefly reviewing the current state of theory in CALL and identifying the role theory has so far taken in the field, expanding the term to encompass what might more precisely be called theoretical approaches, perspectives, frameworks, or models. It then offers the following classification system for characterizing theory in CALL.

1) Atheoretical CALL: research and practice that makes no formal connection to any theory
2) Theory Borrowing: taking a theory directly from its source (linguistics, education, SLA, HCI, etc.) and applying it wholesale in a CALL setting
3) Theory Adaptation: using versions of existing theories with changes to fit the CALL context
4) Theory Synthesis: multiple adaptations producing coherent results, such as blending adapted SLA theory with adapted HCI theory

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5) Theory Construction: the creation of a native CALL theory, informed by external theoretical considerations and consonant with them but firmly grounded on insights from CALL research and experience

6) Theory Refinement: the improvement of a theory through cycles of research and reflection; this could apply to (3), (4) , or (5).

A review of recent CALL literature has identified numerous examples of atheoretical CALL and theory borrowing. There are far fewer examples of adaptation or synthesis, and even fewer, as noted above, of theory construction.

It is of course not yet clear that a full-blown native CALL theory is the ideal for the field, or even possible. What is apparent, though, is that there is room for much more development of CALL theory through adaptation and synthesis. To date this has been done largely in an ad hoc fashion: this paper concludes with a proposal for developing a framework that would potentially lead to greater coherence in these processes. The framework would be technology-centered, recognizing that the computer is not just a neutral tool but often a major player in its mediating role with respect to learners, teachers, and language materials and content. Crucially, this does not mean that the technology is more important than the learner or any other participant in the learning process; rather, the framework attempts to identify the unique properties of the computer that distinguish it from previous technologies such as books, audio, and videotapes.

Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to bring the discussion of theory in CALL out into the open. Levy and Stockwell (2006), citing Neuman (2003), observe that the role of theory is to frame "how we look at and think about a topic" (p. 111). For those who contend that CALL has a worthwhile perspective to offer distinct in some fundamental ways from theories of its associated disciplines, then further exploration of how to incorporate the impact of technology into such frames is warranted.

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Keywords

Theory, framework, theory adaptation, theory synthesis, theory construction

Bio Data

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Technologies and L2 Writing: Designing Practitioners into Research

Abstract

We address the need to build practice-orientation into a research design. It can be difficult to engage language teachers in research but doing so means that the findings are more likely to be applied, to the benefit of student learning. Equally, teachers' concerns ought to influence the CALL research agenda. In an institutional research project, we have been exploring technology support for the teaching of L2 writing. We have drawn on Action Research (Zuber-Skerrit) and Participatory Design (Muller et al.) to try to bridge the gulf between practitioners and researchers. We conducted a survey of language teachers, both to encourage initial interest and to ensure that we appreciated their concerns and treated these as central to the research. Workshops and individual consultations have kept teachers involved and we now have a small group of language teachers participating as researchers in a programme of teaching observations in a technology-enhanced language teaching space.

Short Paper

Context

Practising teachers and research
Continuing exchange between those who practice teaching and those who research teaching ought to benefit learners, but this does not always exist. Educational researchers have long been aware of a gulf between teachers and those who undertake research into teaching and learning. For example, Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1990) noted that,

> " few teachers participate in codifying what we know about teaching, identifying research agendas, and creating new knowledge …"

> "Those who have daily access, extensive expertise and a clear stake in improving classroom practice have no formal way to make their knowledge of classroom teaching and learning part of the literature on teaching".

This kind of gap is not confined to education. Similar difficulties have been identified and addressed wherever new technologies are introduced into the workplace, and particularly in CSCW (Computer Supported Co-operative Work) and HCI (Human Computer Interaction).

In Computer-Assisted Language Learning two areas of teacher alienation (from educational researchers and from technology developers) may be combined. Yet there is increasing acceptance that teacher attitudes and experiences are critically influential in the process of adopting new technologies and understanding how to use them effectively to enhance student learning. In the work described here, we draw on *Action Research* (Zuber-Skerrit) and *Participatory Design* (Muller *et al*) to find research methods that bring domains together.

The research described here is the first part of a programme, entitled Building a Classroom Environment for Innovation & Research, funded by the one of the UK Centres of Excellence in Teaching & Learning (LWW-CETL[2]). The project aim is to explore the changing use of classroom-based technology in the context of developing student writing. The goal is to

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[2] http://www.lww-cetl.ac.uk/

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increase knowledge and understanding but this project also aims to influence practice. We hope it will help more teachers and students to benefit from a new, technology-enhanced teaching space and we hope it will encourage teachers to exchange good practice. We have therefore tried to increase teacher awareness and involvement through the design of the research. We describe here how this has worked during the first phase, with particular reference to a survey about the teaching of L2 writing.

Writing survey overview
This was an online survey, carried out in March 2007. Its primary aim was to help us to understand how language teachers think about and approach the teaching of L2 writing. This was in order to inform the second part of the project, which is exploring and evaluating the role of different technologies in the teaching of writing. Our secondary aim was to design the survey so that it would also be an instrument to engage teachers in the research.

The survey went through several design stages. The first draft, by the authors, was submitted to a small number of language teachers for comment, and some modifications were made. Comments on the second draft were made by the LWW CETL pedagogical researcher and some further redrafting resulted. The survey was then administered to a small group of language teachers, who completed it and commented. Minor modifications to the wording resulted from this.

Although the teaching of writing in the less widely taught "world" languages is a major area of interest, distribution was not limited to this group; all language teachers in both language centres and academic departments in two UK Higher Education institutions were invited by email to complete the survey online.

36 complete responses were received from teachers of 23 different languages. A large majority (88%[3]) stated that they taught mainly in higher education, with a further 6% stating that they taught below undergraduate degree level. The remainder, chose "Other" as a response but actually specified higher education institutions, apart from one, who specified "evening classes". Their teaching covered levels from beginners to advanced.

We wanted the questionnaire to show teachers that the researchers were interested in their concerns and opinions. We hoped this would encourage them to stay involved with the project. Our main strategies were:

- To ask about all aspects of their teaching of writing, not just about technology use.
- To make questions quick to complete where possible (using radio buttons, checkboxes etc) *but* also to provide plenty of optional opportunities for free text input
- To give opportunities for different levels of further commitment. These ranged from just being on a mailing list, to being observed while teaching, being interviewed, to becoming part of the research team.

Topics covered in the survey

The place of writing in the programme of study
We wanted to find out how the teaching of writing was conceived in language programmes and what proportion of language course time was given to this. Just under half of the responding teachers (46%) taught in programmes that split language learning into different skills or aspects. Those who did were invited to name the different aspects. The following words and phrases that they used seem to include or imply writing:

> *"writing skills", "essay, prose, translation" "Production-Writing" "writing"(5)*

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[3] Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number in the text but given to two decimal places in tables.

"prose and creative writing" "writing/grammar/resumes in <the language>"

"writing/composition in <the language>" "essay writing" "prose" "production".

"the four skills" "undergraduate writing". "use of <the language> (reading, comprehension, and writing)"

The time allocated to "teaching students to write in the target language" was usually perceived by teachers to be less than 50% of the language programme, with the largest group estimating 10%-25% of the time and 70% estimating 25% or less (see Figure 1).
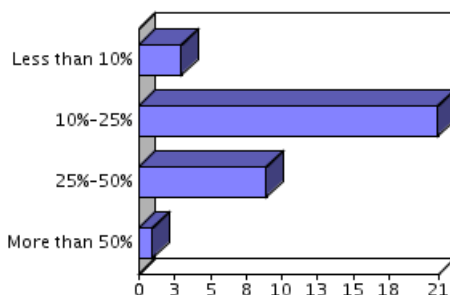

Figure 1: Teacher estimates of proportion of the language programme is concerned with teaching students to write in the target language

Texts that students write

The next area of enquiry was the kind of text that students were expected to write, with both checkbox and free text answers invited. The checkbox answers, in order of frequency were: essay, short paragraph, letter, dialogue summary, email (see Figure 2). A range of other texts were listed in the free text option, including: stories, reviews, CVs, letters of intention, messages, translations, instructions, advice, answers to questions, sentences, grammar exercises, and dictation.
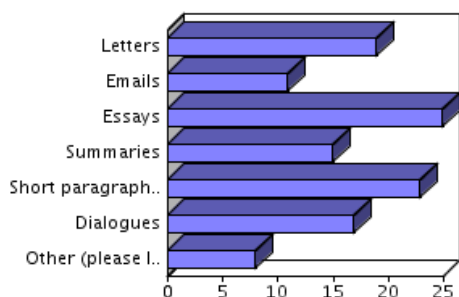

Figure 2: Texts that teachers ask their students to write (checkbox answers)

Classroom and homework writing

As expected, most of the teachers expected their students to write both in the classroom and independently. The survey asked teachers two follow-up questions about the activities they asked their students to do in the classroom and outside. In analysing the answers we looked for answers to the following questions:

1. Do any of the named activities appear only in one list (in class *or* out of class)?
2. What activities appear in both lists?
3. Does the wording of any items suggest a relationship between in- and out-of-class (for example, a follow-up, or preparatory activity)?
4. Do any of the named activities require the use of technology, or of any other resources?
5. Do any of the named activities imply communication or collaboration with other people?

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6. Are there any items that seem particular to one language or languages with a particular characteristic; what can the activities tell us about the teaching of different languages?

Learning to write

The next two questions aimed to probe what teachers perceived as the key learning objectives in the teaching of writing, and what they perceived their students to find difficult. It was hoped that the responses might reflect the intellectual demands of L2 writing and what teachers considered to be priorities for learning. Again, we wondered whether some issues would be common to L2 writing in general and whether some language-specific points would emerge. The process of analysis was similar for the two questions and can briefly be described as follows. The two researchers together made a list of all the words and phrases that were used by teachers in responding to the question, and made a simple count of the number of instances of each word or phrase. We refer to these words and phrases as 'items' below. This gave one very crude indication of what teachers considered important in the teaching and learning of writing. Following on from this, the list of items was queried repeatedly, each time allocating them to categories. The categories used in the five iterations were:

1. Items implying work at the level of sentence, OR at the level of text, OR at the interpersonal (writer-reader relationship) level
2. Items that imply written discourse OR that could imply either written or oral discourse
3. Items that suggest writing for authentic communication OR writing used for teaching purposes
4. Items that apply to writing in general OR to writing in L2 OR to writing in one particular language
5. Writing as process OR writing as product

In each case, the method of working was the same; the two researchers worked independently to allocate items to categories and then met to compare results. In the event of disagreement, discussion was used to resolve it. The aim was to achieve at least 80% agreement after discussion. In the event, this level of agreement was achieved in all cases before discussion. These two questions generated particularly complex data and further analysis is in progress. It is clear that the meaning of "writing" changes according to the language learning context. In some cases, the focus was on character and word formation. A high percentage of items related to working at the level of the sentence, for example on syntax and grammar. This might suggest that exploring technology support for work on writing at this level would be of wide benefit to language teachers. For others, the priority was work at the level of a whole text, such as developing an argument. Finally, awareness of register, cultural awareness and other aspects of the reader-writer relationship were also considered important.

Improving the teaching environment

The focus of the final part of the survey was the learning and teaching environment, and the resources that teachers use. We asked a number of open questions here; although we are interested in the role of technologies we were reluctant to force teachers to focus on this; if technology was not perceived as a high priority it would be useful to know this.

First, we asked teachers what changes to their classroom environment would help them most with their teaching of writing. The responses were analysed by putting them into categories:

A – responses about the teaching room   - 7
B – responses about equipment and resources – 29
C – responses about time or timetabling – 5
D – responses about other things – 7
E - no answer or not sure – 4

In category A, there were 7 responses. Most wanted more space, greater flexibility and room to move around. One was not specific but requested "better facilities", another wished to have

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a fixed teaching base rather than moving around between rooms, and the final one (which, arguably, should be in category B) asked for the room to be "media-networked".

29 requests fell into category B and were nearly evenly split between requests for electronic resources (for example, "computers", "data projector", "electronic whiteboard", "audio-visual equipment" "internet access" and "fixed and easy to use PowerPoint") and other resources (for example, "larger desk", "larger whiteboard", "OHP", "individual blackboards", "teaching guides", "graded readers", "better writing surfaces", "alphabet charts").

The resources that were listed as "most important" in the teaching of writing were quite varied. It also seems that some respondents interpreted this question as another invitation to suggest improvements to the teaching environment. The most commonly listed items were: electronic materials (8); audio-visual materials (8); books, magazines and other paper texts (8), pen and paper (7); whiteboard (6) and good desks/writing surfaces for students (5).

Technologies for teaching writing

The survey moved on to ask specific questions about learning technologies and the use of computers. In view of the range of languages under consideration, it seemed important to address any implications for computer use arising out of non-roman scripts. In our sample, 37% of the teachers taught a language that used a non roman script. Of the rest, 40% said the language that they taught had a character set similar to that of English but with some variations. Generally, the majority said they either had no significant difficulty in teaching writing or that they managed to work around the difficulties that they encountered. However, 20% stated that computer use was limited and 2% said it was impossible.

Finally, we wanted to find out what technologies the teachers actually used and how useful they perceived them to be in the teaching of writing. They were invited first to complete a matrix to indicate which widely-available technologies they used and to rate their usefulness. This was followed by a question asking them to list any other technologies they used in the teaching of writing. 30 people completed the matrix. In order of use by these teachers, the technologies were:

Technology	Number of teachers using this (/30)
Word processing	26
Websites	26
Email	21
Computer-based exercises (eg cloze)	16
Electronic whiteboard	12
Text-based chat	10
Online discussion forum	9

Other technologies listed were Skype (2), Hot Potato-style exercises and games (though *Hot Potatoes* was not mentioned), a CD and "*translation*"

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When they rated the usefulness of the different technologies the results were as follows, with those rated most useful scoring higher:

Technology	Mean rating
Word processing	3.5
Websites	3.1
Email	3.0
Computer-based exercises (eg cloze)	2.7
Electronic whiteboard	2.75
Text-based chat	2.4
Online discussion forum	1.7

It is interesting that the highest mean rating was only 3.5. The relationship between the perception of usefulness and the amount of use should also be explored.

Conclusion

Did the survey engage the teachers in the research? We asked at the end of the survey whether teachers wished to be kept in touch with the project. 25 of the 36 respondents responded positively and supplied contact details. We also stated that there would be opportunities for fuller participation in the project. We have maintained interest through workshops and demonstrations. We also approached a number of the teachers, to ask whether they would agree to have their lessons observed and/or to act as an observer. We have now carried out initial, unstructured, observations in four different classes. Further structured lesson observation is to take place between January and March 2008. Teachers from the interest group that was created through the survey are acting as observers and also participating in the design of an observation checklist. This appears to be an encouraging sign that the research is perceived as being of interest to language teacher practitioners.

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Keywords

L2 writing, technology, practitioner research, institutional research

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Kohji Itoh

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An Integrated Environment for Assisting Learning Usage of Second Language Expressions Incorporating Visual Presentation Synchronized with Voice Reproduction

Abstract

We have proposed an integrated environment for assisting learning second language, Japanese in sample implementation, through comparison between different usages, in texts, of the same or related expressions. The system provides facility of editing annotations to be used for retrieving such text locations where usage is found of the expressions specified by the learners on the expression relational map. The learners can listen to the recorded voice viewing the corresponding text segment highlighted as well as its prosody presentation. Also implemented is a system diagnosing sentences filled in blanks and guides the learners to the text locations where such expressions are used as they made incorrect use of and finally to those where pertinent expressions are used.

Short paper

The paper reports on the environment we are developing for assisting second language learning as well as authoring, taking Japanese as example in implementation. The electronic text collection used in the learning assistance is syntax analyzed and converted into XML files tagged in syntactic hierarchy and parsed into DOM data for assistance. The instructor assisted by the authoring tools edits and annotates word notes and expression notes to the corresponding text locations. Each of the expression notes describes the expression used at the location with regard to its semantic category and surface-syntactic expression format as well as a memo. The expression notes are edited referring to the collection of prototype notes also edited featuring semantic categories and expression formats. The system provides the expression relational map on which nodes can be deployed representing menu-selected prototype notes related in semantics or expression forms, and on clicking the nodes the learners are guided, by way of the expression notes, to the text locations where the corresponding expressions are used. Using these facilities the system provides 2 modes of learning assistance. One is assistance of understanding and acquiring expressions, in which the system assists reading materials and retrieve text locations where the learners compare usage of the same or related expressions. The other is assistance of learning usage of expressions, in which the system imposes learners tasks to fill in sentence-wise blanks in the text materials and, diagnosing the answers, guides them to the text locations where such expressions are used as they made incorrect use of, through which the learners may perceive their mistakes by themselves, and finally to those where pertinent expressions are used. As the integrated language learning environment, the system also incorporates phonetic language learning assistance. The time stamps resulting from speech recognition of the prepared voice files of the model-reading the materials aloud are embedded into the syntactic tags of the XML material text documents which enable the system to highlight the corresponding text parts in synchronization with voice reproduction. By using the scheme in making the learners to compare use cases of expressions in the varied contexts, the system makes them recognize semantic units in perceptive level, thus promoting generalization of the contexts in which the focused expressions can be used, i.e. evolution of the learner language. Also provided in the phonetic assistance is a mechanism in which prosody elements, e.g. pitch, of the model voice and the learner's are displayed in conjunction with the moras. In this way the assistance of understanding and acquiring expressions, learning usage of expressions as well as phonetic language learning comes from the common material text XML documents and the note XML

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documents whose tags represent or include syntactic, semantic, surface and phonetic contents.

Keywords

Second language learning, assisting acquisition of expressions, expression notes, comparison of usage in texts, expression relational map, phonetic assistance

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Kurt Kohn & Petra Hoffstaedter

University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

Authenticated Language Learning with Do-It-Yourself Corpora

Abstract

Our presentation is based on the European SACODEYL project, which focuses on the
compilation and pedagogical exploitation of video interviews with teenagers from 7 European
countries. The interview transcripts are stored in online corpora supported by pedagogically
motivated annotation, enrichment and search tools. In a do-it-yourself fashion, teachers can
annotate and enrich a corpus according to their own needs and preferences. This makes the
approach particularly suitable for authenticated language learning in e-learning-supported
contexts of content and language integrated learning (CLIL). We will conclude our presentation
with results from a pedagogical evaluation with German secondary school learners of French.

Short Paper

The pedagogical relevance of CALL applications should to be seen in close connection with their
suitability for supporting key principles of communicative and constructivist language learning,
such as learner autonomy, collaborative learning and authentication. In our paper we will take
up this requirement and explore its practical implications for the integration of corpus-based
language learning and teaching in the wider context of e-learning-supported blended language
learning.

In recent years, the pedagogical exploitation of corpora has been extended beyond
lexicography and grammar writing to include the analysis and (critical) evaluation of ELT
textbooks and grammars, the construction of targeted learning tasks based on "real" language
as well as autonomous data-driven learning explorations by learners themselves. In addition to
native speaker reference corpora, new corpora have emerged whose very concept and design
is motivated and influenced by pedagogical interests and considerations. The range goes from
non-native speaker reference corpora of written and spoken learner English (ICLE and
LINDSEI) to spoken English as a lingua franca (VOICE: http://www.univie.ac.at/voice) and
small do-it-yourself corpora that focus on genres and topics of immediate relevance to a
specific group of learners (cf. Tribble 1997).

While these corpora provide a wealth of empirical information and help English language
teachers and ELT content developers match their pedagogical decisions with real language,
they share a serious drawback: corpora contain texts in the sense of surface manifestations of
attested language use, bare of any contextual information (cf. Widdowson 2003: 75-91). And
standard corpus techniques such as concordances, word lists and frequency counts are applied
to these decontextualised data with the aim of studying primarily lexico-grammatical patterns
and aspects of word meaning.

Especially small pedagogic corpora are offering interesting possibilities for dealing with these
limitations. Sabine Braun (2006) argues that the language learning potential of corpora should
be further increased by adapting them in more specific ways to pedagogical needs and
purposes. How this can be achieved is illustrated by ELISA, a small corpus of video-recorded
spoken interviews with American, British, Irish and Australian speakers of English from
different walks of life (http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/elisa). Pedagogical adaptation particularly
includes a section-based topic annotation as well as access to pedagogically relevant
enrichment resources such as audio/video files, concordances and ready-made language

learning tasks. The overall objective of ELISA is to help teachers and learners proceed from decontextualised textual data to context-embedded discourse interaction and thus to facilitate and promote authenticated language learning.

The ELISA approach has been further developed in our European Minerva project SACODEYL (http://www.um.es/sacodeyl). The project focuses on the compilation and pedagogical exploitation of structured video interviews with British, French, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Rumanian and Spanish adolescents from 13 to 18 years of age. The interview transcripts are stored in online corpora and pedagogically annotated and enriched for language learning and teaching purposes. Special emphasis is given to the design and development of pedagogical corpus tools that support a "do-it-yourself" approach.

The SACODEYL annotator operates offline and enables teachers to define their own annotation categories (e.g. topic, grammar, lexis, discourse markers, and CEF level) and to assign them in a drag-and-drop fashion to relevant interview passages. This allows them to annotate the interview transcripts with regard to characteristics they deem pedagogically most relevant. Additional enrichment resources (e.g. sound/video files, cultural background information and focused language learning packages) are stored in a Virtual Resource Pool and can be integrated via Resource Sheets where appropriate.

The SACODEYL browse & search interface operates online and supports a flexible combination of pedagogically motivated options. This includes in particular browsing the entire (small!) corpus, running concordance analyses, searching for words, word combinations and lexical co-occurrences in different search spans from sentences/utterances to passages and interviews, as well as selecting interview passages according to thematic, lexical/grammatical and CEF criteria. The search interface also displays links to available enrichment resources, e.g. corresponding video and sound files, language notes, comprehension and writing tasks or grammatical exercises.

In our presentation we will first take a closer look at the SACODEYL pedagogic corpus approach, in particular the annotation, enrichment and search facilities and interviews from the French corpus. Special attention will also be given to our free-of-charge authoring tool Telos Language Partner (cf. Kohn 2008) and how it can be used to exploit pedagogically interesting and relevant interview passages for the creation and customisation of web-based language learning materials for skills practice and knowledge development. The open source e-learning platform Moodle will be used to demonstrate the pedagogical potential of combining corpus-focused language learning activities with online communication and interaction. This is where the principles of authentication, autonomy and collaboration become real. We will conclude our presentation with results from a pedagogical evaluation with German secondary school learners of French.

Throughout our presentation, we will emphasis the specific do-it-yourself quality of our pedagogic corpus approach. Teachers are enabled to expand existing corpora or to create new ones and, what is more, to annotate and enrich a corpus according to their own needs and preferences. This makes our approach particularly suitable for authenticated language learning across a wide range of cultural and/or subject-specific domains as especially required in contexts of content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

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Keywords

Pedagogic corpora, authentic language learning, e-learning

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Mike Levy & CLaire Kennedy

Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Mobile Learning for Italian: Differentiating the Approach for Advanced and Beginner-Level Students

Abstract

This presentation compares the methodological approach in two mobile learning projects for Italian using SMS. Both projects were concerned primarily with vocabulary and aimed at engaging students in motivating tasks and activities fully integrated into their course. While the first project involved a small group of advanced level students (n=18), the second developed an approach suited to a much larger constituency of first semester beginner level learners (n=76). In both experiments, survey and interview data were collected systematically over a 6-week period. This presentation reports on this data and describes how the pedagogical frameworks differed according to level, especially in terms of message content, delivery strategies, and task design.

Short Paper

The design, content and strategy for mobile learning in Italian in the School of Languages & Linguistics at Griffith University are largely derived from the wider goals of the degree program. Italian is presented as both an object of study in itself and a means to study other things, especially to explore Italian literature, cinema, society, politics, popular culture and food culture. The 'language-and-culture' courses taught in Italian are accompanied by two in English providing an overview of contemporary Italian history and of sociolinguistic matters and the history of the language. In the 'language-and-culture' courses, a student-centred teaching approach is adopted that seeks to promote not only development of linguistic and cultural competence, but personal language learning strategies, reflective independent learning and research-based learning. In beginning to think about mobile learning, smooth and effective integration into the program has been a primary concern, in the sense that each mobile learning element has been devised as an integral part of at least one course, mostly for use outside class.

This paper represents the culmination of extended work on two mobile language learning projects in Italian. The first Italian project built upon the early initiatives of Houser et al. (2001) and Dias (2002) and explored Italian vocabulary learning via mobile SMS with advanced level students (Levy & Kennedy, 2005). A particular focus in the first project concerned the nature and timing of the recall prompts to enable effective vocabulary learning (n=18). The vocabulary items were selected from the novel the students study in the course. Though the language is demanding, the novel is short; furthermore, it is a detective story and past experience has shown that different groups of students have enjoyed it. This project also aimed to engage students in motivating tasks and activities consistent with the informal, social and entertainment functions of mobile phones in the world outside the educational institution. Messages and activities included course reminders, pointers to related Internet sites, information messages, and quizzes and notes on such things as film titles, proverbs, and idioms.

The second project built upon the first project but with a methodological approach suited to a much larger constituency of beginner level learners of Italian (n=76). It aimed to closely integrate classwork with out-of-class SMS messaging, as in the earlier work, but it differed in that it focused on the requirements of learning vocabulary at beginner rather than advanced level. In the second experiment SMS messaging was therefore used to consolidate vocabulary in pre-defined and specific lexical fields. The two main research questions were: "What were the students' reactions to

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the 'pushing' of course-related messages, especially concerning frequency and timing?", and "What was the optimal type and difficulty level of content in a message?"

In both projects, survey and interview data were collected systematically over a 6-week period, during the project and at its completion. In the beginners' project, we collected data through a pre-trial and a post-trial questionnaire, both administered in class. The pre-trial questionnaire, completed by 91 students, included questions on their use of mobile phones in general, any concerns they felt regarding the use of phones for teaching purposes in this project, and their estimate of how many messages per day it would be appropriate for us to send. The post-trial questionnaire, completed by 58 students, sought feedback on their experience of the messaging, including preferences for frequency, timing and message content.

This presentation will describe the pedagogical framework, the message content and the delivery strategies that were trialled, as well as student feedback on the task design, material content and effectiveness, as represented in the data. Individual differences and the advantages of using SMS messaging as a push technology in language learning are a focus. Based upon the experience gained from these two projects, broader design and evaluation issues will also be considered, especially in terms of how the technological and methodological response might change for students with differing backgrounds, motivation, learning goals and language levels. How CALL designer-teachers progressively introduce CALL into courses and assessment —after evaluation has occurred and mobile learning techniques and strategies are proven—will also be highlighted.

Keywords

Mobile learning, mobile phones, cell phones, methodology

Bio Data

Professor Mike Levy is Head of School of Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University. His CALL research aims to identify the most effective approaches to language teaching and learning in a technology-mediated context. Recent work has focussed on culture learning, mobile learning of Italian and online pedagogy for Mandarin Chinese. Mike's most recent books are *CALL Dimensions*, co-authored with Glenn Stockwell (Erlbaum, 2006), and *Teacher Education in CALL*, co-edited with Phil Hubbard (Benjamins, 2006). He is Associate Editor of the CALL Journal and on the Editorial Boards of the ReCALL Journal and Innovation in Language Learning & Teaching.

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Jia (Joan) Li

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A Cross-Cultural and Linguistic Approach to Enhancing ESL Students' Vocabulary Acquisition Using Computer-Assisted Learning Scaffolding

Abstract

This case study explores the potential in enhancing ESL students' vocabulary acquisition by using computer-assisted learning scaffolding to integrate their cultural and linguistic-based strategies with mainstream instructional practices. Twenty-four Chinese ESL students in a Toronto public high school participated in the study. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were employed to investigate the profile of students' preferred vocabulary learning strategies. A reading experiment in a computer-assisted language learning environment was conducted to compare the learning outcome when students learned vocabulary through sustained reading with and without computer-assisted scaffoldings that were congruent with their preferred learning strategies.

Short Paper

This paper investigates Chinese students' experiences in learning English as a second language (ESL) within the first five years of their arrival in Canada. It focuses on the ways that Chinese students intuitively applied aspects of their learning style to increase the efficiency with which they learned English vocabulary, thus identifying directions for improving their learning using computer-assisted language learning support.

Background of the study
The Chinese have been the largest immigrant group for the last nine consecutive years in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007). With only beginner and early intermediate levels of English proficiency upon their arrival, many of the Chinese secondary school students and in particular, those who reside in inner-city school neighborhoods, confront a formidable challenge in meeting the academic aspect of English requirements within four to five years (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Klesmer, 1993). They subsequently fall behind grade requirements, incurring a high dropout rate (Brown, 2006; Watt & Roessingh, 2001). For example, while in 2006, the majority of ESL students failed (32%) or deferred (30%) the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test – a requirement for graduation (The Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2006), 22 out of 24 Chinese ESL students in this project also failed the literacy test. All of the twelve Grade 10 students who participated in the study in 2005 failed to graduate in 2007 due to missing Grade 11 and/or 12 English credits, and three of them dropped out. This picture is in stark contrast to numerous studies which have shown that most of Chinese immigrant students often succeed against these odds and have a higher success rate than other ethnic groups (e.g., Gunderson, 2007; Peng & Wright, 1994; Siu, 1994; Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995).

Despite the observation of chronic academic failures by these Chinese students, scant literature is available that examine their cross-cultural and linguistic experience in learning English, as well as to explore educational interventions that could optimize their performance. A hypothesis that I investigate in the study is that one of the greatest impediments to their learning of English results from the failure to obtain sufficient academic vocabulary within a limited timeframe. This is caused by the challenges they experience in changing from the vocabulary teaching and learning methodology typically practiced in China to the Canadian ESL vocabulary teaching methodology. This study aimed to examine the potential of a computer-

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assisted language learning (CALL) system in enhancing students' English vocabulary learning by facilitating and synergizing their accustomed effective learning strategies.

Methods

Twenty-four Chinese ESL students at Grades 9-10 in a Toronto public school participated in the two-year study. This case study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Campbell, 1975; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). These include questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a reading experiment in a computer-assisted language learning environment facilitated by the e-Lective system (Cummins & Chascas, 2003). Using a mixed factorial design, with one between-subject variable (student groups) and three within-subject variables (test time, conditions and versions), this reading experiment compared the learning outcome and strategy variations when the students learned vocabulary through sustained reading with and without computer-enhanced scaffolding that supported their preferred learning strategies.

Findings

The findings showed that the Chinese students' limited English skills seemed to impede their exploration and activation of a diverse range of strategies, however, an enhanced variety of strategies were found to be employed when they learned vocabulary through sustained reading using the computer-enhanced support and in particular, online bilingual dictionaries. The findings from repeated-measures ANOVAs of vocabulary tests indicate that the students acquired more vocabulary with computer-assisted scaffoldings that were congruent with their preferred learning strategies than they did under the non-computer-assisted learning condition. Significant variations were found in the students' vocabulary acquisition within the computer-enhanced environment to be related to their existing levels of English proficiency, and their understanding of word meanings in English and Chinese.

Significance

This study is the first to explore the integration of immigrant students' cultural and linguistic-based strategies with mainstream instructional practices by using technology-enhanced scaffolding as catalysts that appeal to a broader range of students. It directly corresponds to educators' urgent needs for innovative educational interventions that progressively improve ESL students' English learning. The study provides insights for policymakers to develop programs, design curricula and in particular, for teachers to implement effective classroom instructions with the supports that are potentially available in technology-enhanced environments. In conclusion, the findings suggest that student progress will be enhanced when teachers build on the learning strategies that students bring to school and facilitate this instruction with the supports for text processing and comprehension that are potentially available in computer-enhanced learning environments.

Keywords

English language learners, vocabulary acquisition, language learning strategies, electronic text reading, and online dictionaries

Bio Data

Dr. Jia (Joan) Li is a recent graduate from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Toronto, Canada). She is interested in conducting research that examine the CALL potential in optimizing second language learners' performance by supporting their culturally and linguistically based language learning strategies, particularly in the areas of computer-assisted vocabulary acquisition and computer-assisted reading.

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Systematic Ways of Teaching, Practicing and Testing High Frequency Vocabulary Online

Abstract

The international study of vocabulary is an effective way for learners to improve their language skills in their target language. In this respect, word frequency lists can be of much help as they offer learners the chance to focus their vocabulary study on the most useful words. Furthermore, word frequency lists give material writers the opportunity to make informed decisions about the particular words they include in textbooks, readers, and other language learning materials. Various new types of online reading comprehension and vocabulary development programs and tests were compared in this overview to consider how useful they may be for guiding individual or classroom L2 vocabulary instruction. It explored how these programs seek to test and teach new L2 vocabulary learning and reading comprehension strategies more innovatively and accurately. Several programs are reviewed, compared and combined to suggest the use of a comprehensive, recycling model of second language vocabulary acquisition (SLVA), to help maximize effectiveness in teaching and testing these areas.

Short Paper

A Roadmap to Successful Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Acquisition

It is not always readily apparent to learners and teachers exactly how to best utilize word lists. Certainly, simply becoming aware of words and their relative usefulness gives learners a certain advantage. In this way word frequency lists can give students their first exposure to various words. However, the main purpose of this paper is to identify online resources for utilizing word frequency lists, and in some cases exercises thereof, created by the writer and others online. These online resources cover three main aspects concerning vocabulary and frequency lists: 1) Vocabulary knowledge assessment, 2) Improving vocabulary teaching/learning using generic online content and activities, and 3) Integrating online vocabulary and reading programs with more traditional four-skills classroom/blended learning to maximize lexical and comprehension development in 120 languages. What learning behaviors can or should we aim to track/monitor using an online Course Management System, and how can we best do so in ways that keep CALL-enhanced learning both enjoyable and effective?

These topics will be discussed in this plenary, focusing on how to better use available online dictionaries, reading labs and vocabulary learning programs to practice and research L2 reading, writing, speaking and listening development in English or any other target language supported by these sites (118 currently are). In particular we will examine CALL-enhanced vocabulary acquisition and reading practice programs. Our discussion and online samples will include activities and issues such as:

- selection, integration and evaluation of vocabulary and reading sites in language learning and instruction;
- online L2 reading and vocabulary practice courseware design and development;
- automatic online test development versus blended in-class survey administration;

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- teacher training in the use of these tools.

The aim of this presentation is to discuss as simply as possible the basic areas of vocabulary knowledge and research that need to be understood to improve instruction in this crucial area of language learning, whether online or in traditional classrooms. It re-examines Shei's (2001) dream of having 'flexible textbooks' or a 'portable classroom,' in which language learning texts and lessons might be chosen by students themselves, following principles of self-access learning, or more independent, extensive reading. Although vast amounts of authentic materials are now available online to help language learners build up vocabulary and language skills in many languages, the consumer is almost 'spoiled for choice,' and often at a loss where to begin. This article aims to provide a systematic language- learning and teaching framework, to serve as a filter for helping both students and teachers to select more useful CALL sites and programs, showing how to combine them into an effective language learning program for either classroom- or self-access. It will help both kinds of users to be able to better sift through the rivers of online data, to find and focus on what we will refer to as the 'CALL or ESL/EFL gold.' Though our discussion will be in English mostly about using these sites to improve English learning, our systematic approach and many of the sites it includes can be used for learning as many as 120 major languages of the world. While most language learners are still using more traditional classrooms and textbooks, CALL-based instruction is growing rapidly. The practical problem for both teachers and students who have such resources, however, is to find some systematic approach to plow through the plethora of online data, to be able to make a sensible system for learning language most enjoyably and effectively. This presentation will provide such an integrated system, including many of the most well-designed sites that combine the advantages of using authentic materials in language learning, with online tools to help simplify them and provide various kinds of language learning support that can aid both learners and teachers. As Shei (2001) tried to do in an earlier "Automatic Lesson Generation System," this article will first briefly explore the relationship between reading and vocabulary building, and then invoke theories from second language learning to support the design principles of our approach, followed by the writer's integration of many of the best "Wonders of the Web" at his www.CALL4ALL.us site. We will describe the machinery and modules of this site, followed by a working example of its use, followed by a discussion, recommendations for implementation and research, and a conclusion.

Bio Data

For over 20 years **John Paul Loucky** has taught all areas of EFL in Japan. His dissertation compared methods of vocabulary development. Research interests include L2 reading and vocabulary acquisition, use of various glossing and translation programs and devices, electronic and web dictionaries; designing Depth of Lexical Processing and Vocabulary Knowledge Scales and Taxonomies of Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Learning Strategies. He edited three Cloze Listening workbooks using children's songs, holiday songs and love songs to increase language learning enjoyment. His Homepage www.CALL4All.us provides a clearinghouse of CALL organizations and a Virtual Encyclopedia of language education sites worldwide.

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Simulation Based Design for Teaching Pragmatics

Abstract

Homestay can, on the most part, be an enjoyable experience for international students. However, in some cases, international students may create misunderstandings due to a lack of pragmatic competence. Therefore, the presenter will discuss a project that explores the use of multimedia simulation in the teaching or speech acts. The presenter will also show how simulations can give students the chance to fail without the fear of failing and the chance to learn from their mistakes.

Short Paper

Homestay interaction problem for EFL students

People have been known to get themselves into all sorts of difficulties when going abroad. In many situations, the person going overseas will say the wrong thing, or refrain from saying the right thing, despite an intermediate or higher level of grammatical and lexical ability in the language of the host culture. A person without this pragmatic competence in the host language will often alienate people who might otherwise be sympathetic towards this person. One major area of pragmatic competence deserves special attention: speech acts.

Teaching of speech acts

As Rose (2005) and others have observed, instruction on areas of pragmatic competence has positive effects, although currently no method of teaching pragmatic competence has proven itself most effective. Judd (1999) elaborates on a five component model towards teaching pragmatic competence focusing on speech acts: "(1) teacher analysis of speech acts, (2) cognitive awareness skills, (3) receptive/integrative skills, (4) controlled productive skills, and (4) free, integrated practice" (p. 162). The teacher analysis of the speech acts required will come from teacher intuition of speech acts required to interact in situations commonly encountered by homestay students. A computer mediated simulation will be used to deliver material necessary for the remaining four of the model's components.

Simulations/Gaming in language teaching

Scarcella & Crookall (1990) argue that simulations are conducive to language learning through allowing a learner to experiment with different styles of communication and allow the chance to make mistakes and reflect dispassionately on failures of communication. More specifically, Scarcella & Crookall (1990) point out that in a simulation, learners can be exposed to a wider variety of situations and corresponding speech acts than in the classroom where the most common variety of speech is teacher talk.

Description of project

In this presentation, the presenters will report on the progress of a multimedia simulation designed to teach the speech acts relevant to situations that a person is likely to encounter during a homestay in the United States. The simulation's design will be discussed in terms of its theoretic and pedagogical principles.

The simulation is designed to teach a series of speech acts which a person will need when visiting a native English speaking country, such as the United States, as a homestay student. The learner will go through a series of encounters from making their way to a host family's

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house from the airport, staying a night in a hotel, meeting with a homestay family, going to campus for the first time to arriving at a party held in honor of the homestay student. In going through encounters, a variety of speech acts will be required.

The simulation is modelled after Schank's (2002) learning-by-doing principles which revolve around letting a learner make a mistake while attempting a task, giving the learner access to expert stories relevant to successfully completing the task as needed. The learner can access this feedback while attempting the task or after having failed the task and getting ready to re-try the task. The learner can then practice the skills in a safe space (i.e. the simulation) until the skills for completing the tasks are automatized.

In each simulated encounter, the homestay student will have the chance to perform a speech act and then experience the reaction of the receiver of the speech act. The student will have a variety of choices in how the speech act is to be performed. If the student can choose the correct performance of the speech act, the simulation goes on. If the student chooses a speech act which is detrimental to the relationship between the student and the receiver of the speech act, the student will be allowed to attempt the speech act again. Before the next attempt, the student will have a chance to access expert stories regarding peoples' experiences in performing a certain kind of speech act in a certain kind of way, what kind of response the storyteller got, and how the storyteller learned from making the speech act in that way.

By allowing the student to attempt the speech act in the safety of the simulation, the student can risk failure in performing a speech act and learn possible consequences of inappropriate speech acts, without risk of destroying or damaging fragile relationships which will be necessary to survive in a homestay situation.

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Keywords

Simulation, pragmatics, video

Bio Data

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Forrest Nelson attended the University of Southern Mississippi and obtained a BA in Cultural Anthropology and a MA in language teaching. Forrest is currently an assistant professor at Tokai University Japan. His present interests are in CALL and pragmatics. Specifically, he is

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interested in the use of virtual worlds and simulation and the effect these technologies have on language teaching and learning.

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Evaluating Language Learning in Hypermedia and Virtual Environments

Abstract

Protocol technologies present all types of challenges for educators and learners from teaching practices to assessment. Having moved beyond traditional teaching approaches, hypermedia and virtual environments help people learn through direct experience by performing tasks with real world simulations.

In this context, how can learning be effectively measured in technological environments? Regardless of the answer, it is essential to develop evaluation systems that support all kinds of teaching and learning practices.

With this in mind, our paper proposes adaptive hypermedia and online portfolio as two of the assessment methods which may best suit language learning in online environments.

Short Paper

Posing the question

Hypermedia technology and educational virtual environments are increasingly being used to create instructional spaces for distance education, encouraging learners through direct experience by visualizing concepts and allowing them to carry out tasks simulated the from real world. However, technologies present all types of challenges for educators and learners, ranging from teaching methods to assessment protocols. Having rapidly moved beyond traditional teaching, focused on form rather than meaning, the emerging applications based on interactive simulations, hypermedia and virtual explorations oblige teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, design innovative online activities and devise new evaluation procedures.

In this context, we pose the question of how learning can be effectively measured in technological environments. Despite possible answers, it is essential to develop evaluation systems that will support all kinds of teaching and learning practices focussed on collaborative, interactive, hypermedia and virtual approaches.

Finding solutions

In light of these premises, our paper proposes two methods of assessment for diverse kinds of learning occurring in virtual instructions, adapting conventional learning models into virtual environments such as hypermedia applications and online teaching platforms.

In this sense, and among other traditional methods of assessment based on grades (basically indicative of the degree to which learners meet teachers' expectations in a particular course), standardized assessments (aimed at the completion of standardised test packages and relying on concepts such as reliability and generalizability), we advocate adaptive hypermedia and online portfolio as two types of assessment methods suitable for language learning in online environments.

Adaptive Hypermedia: Meeting your needs

Web-based assessment is widely used to support students in learning and aids them in achieving their goals in many educational situations like self-assessment, assessment of the learning process itself, peer assessment and so on. These applications can be further enhanced when the assessment is learner customized since, as Brusilovsky [2001] argues, individuals have different needs, preferences and wants.

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Since adaptive hypermedia presents content adapted to the hierarchical and linear learning preferences of the users, and delivers content to accommodate visual, verbal, and experiential learning preferences, it plays an important role in both increasing learning- effectiveness and assessing abilities and specific content.

Although many adaptation parameters can be considered (user knowledge, skills, capabilities, interests, preferences, learning styles) the selection of such parameters will depend upon the learning objectives we have in mind.

Furthermore, the computer architecture of an adaptive system is generally divided into three levels:

(1) The user interface executed by the learners and which is in charge of showing the learner target adaptive activities, as well as supplying the means of navigation through the contents.

(2) The Intelligent Server for the Adaptive Selection of Educational Tasks which decides on the most adequate tasks for the individual user.

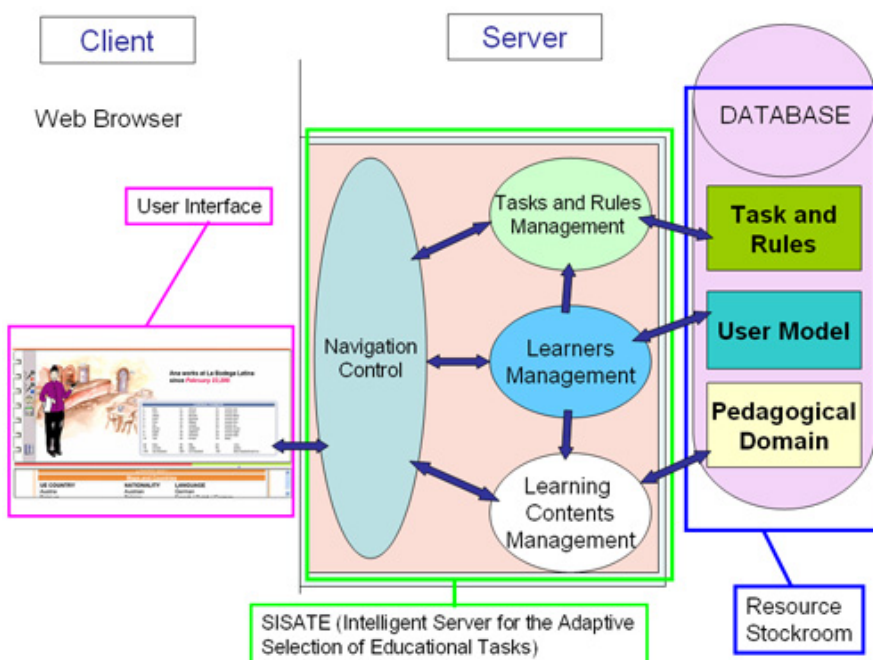(3) The resource stockroom which holds the user data, the contents of the tasks, and the tasks themselves.

Figure 1: Architecture of the Hypermedia System

Portfolio Assessment: Recording learner data

Portfolio assessment is an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in the learning process with the express purpose of showing student progress. Portfolios take advantage of databases as a means of collecting observations of learning activities in or outside of classrooms, logging learner task development and their interactions, including records of conventional performance assessments, grades, samples of student production, interviews with parents /teachers /tutors, and so on.

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Figure 2: Assessment: Record Data

This type of record data model provided by online portfolios, including text, graphics, video, or audio evidence of student learning, gives a multidimensional perspective on learning over time and is suited to a variety of contexts and online learning situations. Though both teacher and peer reviews are important, perhaps the greatest overall benefit of using portfolio assessment is that students are taught to become independent thinkers, facilitating the development of their autonomy as active learners.

Our proposal also focuses on the description of the general structure of online systems for recording data, whose design should follow a set of points such as:

- Identification of stakeholders and a definition of the nature of the educational context.
- Inclusion of administration facilities and methods for moderating participation.
- Provision of adequate feedback, involving students in taking decisions about assessment criteria and procedures.
- Use of standard interfaces and templates easily recognizable and accessible for students and teachers.
- Identification of objectives and outputs (e.g. assignments, skills, linguistic competence, projects, presentations, etc.).
 - Review of the learning process to facilitate continuous improvement and suggestions for achieving objectives.
- Indicators to measure linguistic skills and sub-skills.

Conclusions
In order to answer the question addressed (establishing measures and assessment methods to evaluate learning in technological environments -hypermedia and virtual environments-), our proposal has identified adaptive hypermedia and portfolio assessment as specific evaluation systems that can efficiently support online teaching and learning practices.
In the case of adaptive hypermedia, we can state that it is surely one of the best solutions to assess software since it offers personalized and flexible teaching by providing adaptation to user features in different areas. The architecture of adaptive systems offers important benefits to educational applications, such as assigning grades in peer assessment, guiding students through their learning process or helping them to take decisions on their performance.
In the case of virtual environments, online portfolio assessment, using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, can provide reliability and validity within the assessment process in online teaching. By reporting on exploratory research into designing information systems for online portfolios, this paper has also drawn attention to the significant benefits that online

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portfolio information systems offer in creating, distributing and assessing teaching to a wide range of stakeholders in ways that are superior to other assessment solutions and tools.

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Keywords

Assessment, L2 learning, hypermedia, virtual environments

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Discourse Diaries: Creation and Development of Communities of Practice in Language Teacher Education

Abstract

The impact technology has had on pedagogy in recent years is immense, and there is a growing demand, especially for teachers, to have sufficient training in order to successfully and effectively employ technologies in the classroom. Evidence indicates a lack of ICT in teacher education, while at the same time a rise in ICT skills being required for teaching positions (Kessler, 2006). However, some disciplines are at the early stages of exploiting such new technologies, and Language Teacher Education (LTE) is one such discipline (Kessler, 2006; Yeh, 2006). This paper will examine, through virtual and face to face interactions, the creation and development of Communities of Practice (CoPs) (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and the effect these communities have on their members, who consist of student teachers on a postgraduate ELT course.

Short Paper

The present world we live in is dominated by technology; therefore, it is only logical to equip teachers in initial education with the confidence and expertise in both the theoretical and practical applications of teaching. Thus, introducing student teachers to new technologies through the use of a VLE as part of their course is essential in order for them to survive and become competent teachers of the future, as they are likely to need to employ such systems in their future careers. There are, however, few LTE programmes which introduce and use a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with student teachers in order to promote their professional development, to stimulate peer mentoring (Tarbitt, 2006), and to encourage them to use technologies for teaching (Hegelheimer, 2006).

Current research in the area of CoPs in LTE will be used as a foundation for this paper, which primarily aims at assessing the role of a VLE and face-to-face discussions in forming CoPs. Furthermore, this paper will examine the role these communities play as a discussion forum for reflective practices (Schön, 1991) on teaching and on areas related to ELT, and peer mentoring. Using an Action Research approach (Cohen and Manion, 1989), both qualitative and quantitative analyses have been carried out from data collected, over a 12 week period, through questionnaires, observations and interviews with student teachers on an MA in ELT programme.

Questionnaires were used to gain demographic information on the participants, to gauge their general use of and skills with computers, to gain an insight into their perceptions of new technologies, and to trace the possible integration of these technologies into their teaching. The observation section consisted of student teachers carrying out specific tasks and discussing specific topics on the University VLE, using blogs, chat and discussion fora as well as face-to-face interactions. These tasks/topics entailed discussions relating to their teaching reflections and also some areas in their MA in ELT course, for example, the theory and practice of language teaching and teaching methodologies. These tasks were given to the student teachers at various times and some remained open to post reflections/ideas for two weeks in order to sustain motivation and encourage participation. This is in line with Jones and Issroff (2005), who highlight that motivation for tasks may change over time. To gain more qualitative data on their perceptions of new technologies and face-to-face discussions,

individual interviews were conducted towards the end of the autumn semester. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and followed the format of 'informal interviews' (Jorgensen, 1989: 89).

The creation and development of CoPs have been examined through tasks using online and face-to-face discussion fora, blogs and chat. The discourse from these tasks has been observed and recorded, and a micro corpus of this data has been created and analysed using appropriate software such as Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1999, 2004), in relation to highlighting examples of professional development, peer mentoring, and critical reflection through community building. Transcriptions of this data have followed the criteria set out by Farr, Murphy and O'Keeffe (2004) on the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (L-CIE). Using discourse analysis techniques (Sinclair, 1996), the social interaction of the community members has been examined. Our results have therefore allowed us to highlight how identity, mentoring and community building develop or change over time within the community. Furthermore, this discourse has also provided us with an insight into whether these communities promote self-reflection and in turn professional development.

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Keywords

Virtual learning environments, integration, communities of practice, language teacher education, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics.

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Mocha—Dynamic Learner Behaviour in ICALL

Abstract

To tailor learning software to suit individual language students in different contexts and at different stages of their learning process, we need computational models of learner behaviour. In the Mocha project, we analyse longitudinal learner data—mainly foreign-language texts—from students at two universities and work on the development of such student models. We explore and use methods, algorithms and mathematical models that have been developed in Dynamic Systems Theory (DST). By way of example, the initial data set will capture the learning behaviour in two cases over a total time period of three semesters.

Short Paper

Computer-assisted language learning has made great strides to facilitate language learning for a wide variety of people and in a wide variety of contexts. To tailor learning software to suit individual language students in different contexts and at different stages of their learning process, we need computational models of learner behaviour.

In the Mocha project, we analyse longitudinal learner data—mainly foreign-language texts—from students at two universities and work on the development of such student models. Careful plotting of language learning events such as the mastery of a particular grammatical phenomenon, in time series and phase space diagrams will provide us with the information required for our empirical investigation. Our analysis is solidly grounded in an integrative approach to second language acquisition (SLA) (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005, 2007; Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006) in general and to student modeling in ICALL in particular (Schulze, 2007). Increasingly, SLA today focuses on the behaviour of individual language learners. Like Larsen-Freeman, de Bot, and others we view second language acquisition as a complex and dynamic system. Complexity here refers to the multitude of variables which affect the system, affect the learning processes. These variables can be dependent on one another or interact in other ways, and thus change and are being changed in the process of learning a language. This change is the main reason why the system is described as dynamic. We explore and use methods, algorithms and mathematical models that have been developed in Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) (Hirsch, Smale, & Devaney, 2004; Luenberger, 1979) and Chaos Theory (Gleick, 1987; Lorenz, 1993; Williams, 1997) and which assist us in interpreting the plotted data. The application of the underlying philosophical approach in DST to SLA—the consideration of a multitude of variables (or at least their concatenation) in context—promises a framework for a more integrative conceptualization of language learning. Moreover, DST has a mathematical basis, which may provide a basis for its computational implementation and therefore an impetus for student modeling in CALL. Our improved understanding of the complex and dynamic language learning processes will enable us to conceive, design, implement, and test learner models with our existing language learning software.

The goal of our project—Mocha—is to model the interlanguage process of language learners in a CALL environment and to capture this complex, dynamic system of variables in a student model. To achieve this, we firstly rely on research in interlanguage theory (e.g., Gass & Selinker, 2001), individual learner differences (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005), and learner language

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analysis (Granger, 2003; Granger & Petch-Tyson, 2003; Heift & Schulze, 2007, pp. 83-113; Skehan & Foster, 2005; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005), Secondly, our empirical analysis of learner data concentrates on texts which learners produced over a time period of one or more semesters. With 'texts' we refer to quiz answers and short foreign language essays. This textual data is complemented by comprehensive tracking data as well as information about individual learner biographies and perceptual data elicited through questionnaires and interviews. The data are analyzed with the goal to identify grammatical and ungrammatical uses of language as well as avoidance of certain linguistic constructions over time. The data will then be correlated to text-external data collected in questionnaires and interviews. This will allow us to establish certain patterns in individual interlanguage processes that can be traced back to individual learner differences. The learner variables most relevant are native language, language proficiency and age, which are all learner variables that are known to be significant contributors to individual learner differences.

The data have been collected from two different sources. First, students of German at X University have been using a parser-based CALL program for a total of three semesters, each consisting of thirteen weeks of instruction. As part of their courses, they completed exercises ranging from listening comprehension, sentence building and translation for which the entire interaction with the CALL program was logged. The exercises are part of a comprehensive web-based learning environment that complements face-to-face instruction. Second, students at the University of Y used a learning management system (LMS) (Angel - Cyberlearning Labs) for one semester each. The LMS data are completed by a set of in-class video recordings, in-depth interviews and questionnaires. At both universities, students were at the elementary to intermediate levels.

By way of example, the initial data set will consider the performance of two students over a total time period of three semesters. For student A, who is fictitious, we consider data for which the student successfully completed a set of language learning exercises without making any mistakes when completing all activities as set out in the instructional material. Student B has completed the exercises provided in parser-based system with a mixture of both correct and incorrect responses. The entire data set will then allow us to plot longitudinal and varied learner performance with the ultimate goal to test DST approaches and interpretations on both grammatical and ungrammatical input.

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Keywords

Intelligent CALL, student modeling, natural language processing (NLP), dynamic systems theory (DST), artificial intelligence

Bio Data

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A CALL System for Practicing Speaking Proficiency: Pronunciation, Morphology and Syntax

Abstract

Recent research has shown that a properly designed ASR-based CALL system is capable of detecting pronunciation errors and of providing comprehensible corrective feedback on pronunciation. In the DISCO project we extend this approach to other aspects of speaking proficiency like morphology and syntax. For detecting syntactic errors it is sufficient to know which words were spoken in which order. Morphological and pronunciation errors require a more detailed analysis at the segmental level. Specific speech technology algorithms are developed for detecting errors on pronunciation, morphology, and syntax. These algorithms will be tested off-line with non-native data, and online with language learners.

Short Paper

Language learners are known to fare best in one-on-one interactive learning situations in which they receive optimal corrective feedback. However, one-on-one tutoring by trained language instructors is costly and therefore not feasible for the majority of language learners. In the classroom, providing individual corrective feedback is not always possible This particularly applies to oral proficiency, where corrective feedback has to be provided immediately after the utterance has been spoken.

CALL systems that make use of ASR can offer extra learning time and material, specific feedback on individual errors and the possibility to simulate realistic interaction in a private and stress-free environment [1]. In order to do so, a CALL system should properly detect performance problems, and provide feedback that is embedded in a realistic communicative setting. However, existing CALL systems hardly begin to fulfil these requirements. Recent research has shown that a properly designed ASR-based CALL system is capable of detecting pronunciation errors and of providing comprehensible corrective feedback on pronunciation [2]. This system, called Dutch-CAPT, was designed to provide feedback on a selected number of speech sounds that had appeared to be problematic for learners of Dutch [3]. Scoring accuracy appeared to vary between 75% and 92% for the 15 speakers in the experimental group [4]. The results showed that for the experimental group that had been using the system for four weeks the reduction in the addressed pronunciation errors was significantly larger than in the control group [2]. These results show that it is possible to use speech technology in CALL applications to improve pronunciation. We therefore decided to study how speech technology can best be applied to other aspects of speaking proficiency like morphology and syntax. This research is carried out in the project DISCO (Development and Integration of Speech technology into COurseware for language learning). In the present paper we explain which specific aspects we intend to address, why and how.

It is generally acknowledged in the L2 literature that the fact that L2 learners are aware of grammatical rules does not automatically entail that they also manage to marshal this knowledge while speaking. In other words, L2 learners need to practice speaking and receive feedback on their performance on line, both on pronunciation and on morphology and syntax. In morphology and syntax we will address errors that are known to cause problems in communication and that are known to be made at the lower proficiency levels that are required in national language citizenship examinations in the Netherlands.

For instance, as a consequence of L1 transfer, Turkish learners are known to produce sentence-final verbs as in (A).

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(A)   * Jong mandarijn sneeuwman neus maakte (intended form is: maakt)
[Boy tangerine snowman nose made (makes)]
target: De jongen maakt met een mandarijn de neus van de sneeuwman
[The boy makes the snowman's nose with a tangerine]

A second syntactic phenomenon to acquire is the obligatory presence of the subject in Dutch. If pronominal subject omission is allowed in the L1 it is frequently produced in early L2 developmental stages, as in (B).
(B)   * Loop naar huis
[Walk home]
target: Ik loop naar huis
        [I walk home]

The last syntactic phenomenon to be tackled is Verb Second following an adverbial adjunct. Dutch is a verb-second language that requires subject inversion following an adverbial in initial position, as in (C.2), but many learners construct an SVO clause, as in (C.1).
(C.1) * Dan hij gaat tv kijken
[Then he goes tv watch]
(C.2)   Dan gaat hij tv kijken
        [Then goes he tv watch]

Problems with morphology are persistent in L2 learning [5]. Phonetic-phonological properties play a prominent role in this learning process, as stated by [5: 2]: "The meaning of morphemes and the distribution of their allomorphs cannot be acquired without the phonological capacity to extricate them from the flood of sounds in every sentence". To develop this capacity learners first have to notice the contrast between their own erroneous realization and the target form, following Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis [6].

Difficulties in learning Dutch morphology are related to perception and production of L2 phonemes such as schwa and /t/ in word-final position. As to perception, it is crucial to perceive the differences in (D) in order to understand the Dutch agreement paradigm, and in (E) in order to understand the tense system.
(D)   /maak/, /maakt/, /make(n)/
(E)   /maakt/, /maakte/

On the production part, difficulties in pronouncing consonant clusters may lead learners to say (F) instead of /koopt/.
(F)   /kopet/, /koopte/

For detecting syntactic errors it is sufficient to know which words were spoken in which order. Morphological and pronunciation errors require a more detailed analysis at the segmental level. This will be explained in the full paper.

Acknowledgements

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Keywords

ASR-based CALL, oral proficiency, pronunciation, morphology, syntax, corrective feedback

Bio Data

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A New Second Language Learning Platform in Web 2.0 Age

Abstract

To improve the pedagogical effects of the classical online Azalea system developed in a web1.0 technology for acquisition of writing skill of technical English documents from Japanese, we have introduced AJAX-based Web2.0 technology and an "Awareness" problem solving technique into New AZALEA.

Like Google Map, an event driven AJAX implements a rich client system minimizing not only the *traffic load level of the network* but also giving the client (learner) definitive freedom in selecting the pedagogical content. This helps the learners to gain a sense of participation and also of achievement of the language learning because awareness process mimics the sequence of hypothesis-experimentation-verification so widely adopted in many scientific disciplines. We have implemented all of these by converting the comments prepared as feedback comments for errors in the classical AZALEA into the so-called expression notes based on the relational Map. They can learn the semantics of the expressions through use cases of the expression. This constitutes the most important aspect of second language learning because learning the semantics of the content constitutes the hardest part in learning foreign languages.

Short Paper

The classical AZALEA has been developed in a web1.0 technology of server-client system first to automatically diagnose and then to repair buggy English technical documents written and entered by Japanese writers.

To do this we have developed a new template-based online ICALL (intelligent computer assisted language learning) system capable of automatically diagnosing free-format translated inputs composed by learners, the system returning error contingent feedback whereby the system architecture adopted allows language teachers to build their expertise into the system by themselves without help from KEs (knowledge engineers). The core of the system comprises a unique FSA (finite state automaton)-based template knowledge base system, an extremely fast DP (dynamic programming)-based diagnostic engine based on the global HCS (heaviest common sequence) principle, a POST(part-of speech-tagged) parser and related learners' model and an easy-to use VTAT (visual template authoring tool).

The purpose of the present paper is to improve shortcomings of the classical AZALEA system so that the new system is now effective not only as an automatic diagnosis and repairing system but also as an efficient pedagogic language learning system. The important new features adopted will be summarized below.

1   The function of the new azalea now shifts to 2nd language learning rather than the original automatic diagnostic and repairing function so that 'awareness' principle for improved pedagogic purpose will be adopted.
2   To allow the learners to select their own choice of pedagogic contents, an event driven AJAX of web2.0 technology is adopted so that the rich client system minimizes the data flow to facilitate the traffic flow of the entire learning system.
3   By urging the learners to directly participate in the learning system, the learners will now gain a maximum pedagogic effect by first feeling that they directly participate in the language learning system feeling the sense of achievement at the same time where the

hypothesis-experimentation-verification process which has been widely adopted in many scientific disciplines are implemented here in the system.

We emphasize that item 1 and 3 above combines to effect an integrated pedagogic system such that we remind the learners important use cases of the key words we try to master by means of providing a variety of preliminary problems. Even if a slip in errors sneaks in, awareness approach reminds the learners to reconsider the hypotheses-verification process to capture the right fruits of verification.

Keywords

Web2.0 technology, Ajax, Awareness, online 2nd learning system

Bio Data

After extensive research work on fluid mechanics fields at Lockheed Research Center in Georgia, USA and also at University of Cambridge, **Naoyuki Tokuda** has been a Professor of Computer Science and Director of Information Processing Center of Utsunomiya University, Japan, until he retired from teaching in April of 2001. Since April of 2001 on, he has been a Director of R&D Center of SunFlare Tokyo, Japan. His current interest in research includes the area of natural language applications focusing on Web2.0-based 2nd language learning system and innovative TM (translation memory)-based translation systems. He has a MS Degree from Stanford and a Ph.D from University of Michigan, both in USA.

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Anjel Tozcu

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Computerized Vocabulary Instruction in Foreign Language Learning

Abstract

This paper explores the effect of direct vocabulary learning using Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) on vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and speed of word recognition. It adopts the rationale of the theory of vocabulary acquisition for second language learners proposed by Coady, Carrell, and Nation in which they claim that most sight vocabulary is composed of high frequency words that are well learned with repeated exposure. Therefore, automatic recognition of high frequency words in a given language is very important for successful L1 and L2 reading. The study concludes that learning of frequent vocabulary through CAI also benefits word recognition speed.

(This paper was published in CALL Journal in 2004. As indicated at the end of the short paper, based on the research findings, I designed a CALL Class that can be implemented in intensive foreign language programs.)

Short Paper

Vocabulary knowledge is considered to be one of the most important factors in academic achievement for second or foreign language learners. However, it has typically been neglected in foreign language instruction (Richards 1976). In part this my be due to the fact that many teachers assume that vocabulary instruction amounts to telling students to make guesses about the meaning of a word with regard to the grammatical and pragmatic context in which the word is found (Stein, 1993, p. 203). However, several recent studies have found that contextual guessing by second language learners can be very problematic. For example, one problem is that L2 learners sometimes misrecognize word forms and this misrecognition results in unsuccessful cases of contextual guessing (Huckin & Bloch, 1993, p. 173). Second, L2 learners sometimes do not use context clues properly because of their poor vocabulary knowledge (Huckin & Haynes, 1993, p. 290). Third, as Parry's (1993) study found, a single context hardly gives enough information for an L2 reader to guess the full meaning of a word. A clear sense of a word's full meaning can only be reached via repeated encounters in different contexts (Huckin & Haynes, 1993, p. 290). Fourth, Dubin and Olshtain (1993) after working with native speaker subjects concluded that contextual guessing involves non-linguistic background knowledge. They claim that successful word guessing involves substantial textual support as well as background knowledge both topical and cultural. If this is true of L1 readers, it must be even truer of L2 readers. Thus, it can be assumed that those L2 readers who lack sufficient topical and cultural background knowledge will have difficulty in contextual guessing. Finally, contextual guesswork does not necessarily enhance word learning. It might depend on how much guesswork is involved (Huckin & Haynes, 1993, p. 290). In fact, according to a 1989 Dutch study by Mondria and Wit-de-Boer, there is an inverse relationship between guessibility and retainability. Moreover, Teixeira's 1987 study (as cited in Cohen, 1990) shows that learners make little use of context in order to guess the meaning of unknown words.

This study adopts and explores the rationale of the theory of vocabulary acquisition for second language learners proposed by Coady, Carrell, and Nation (1985) in which they claim that most of the sight vocabulary is composed of high frequency words that are well learned with repeated exposure. Therefore, automatic recognition of high frequency words in a given language is very important for successful L1 and L2 reading, and thus, these words should be

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taught. Starting from Coady, Carrell, and Nation's theory of vocabulary acquisition, this study investigates the effect of direct vocabulary learning using Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) on vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and speed of word recognition. The participants are fifty-six intermediate level students studying English full time for university academic preparation. The students in the treatment group study approximately 2000 of the highly frequent English words on the computer for three hours per week for eight weeks whereas the students in the control group spend the same amount of time reading texts and doing reading comprehension exercises. The study concludes that although both groups show increases in vocabulary gain, and reading comprehension, and a decrease in reaction time for frequent word recognition, the treatment students show significantly greater gains than the control students.

The participants utilized a supplementary language courseware application, New Lexis, to study highly frequent words in English (McVicker, 1995). New Lexis employs STUDY, PRACTICE, and REVIEW modes. It contains 6,400 highly frequent words in English. In the STUDY mode, the words are presented in a list and the student checks the meaning and sees an example sentence, which uses the word. The study mode has two key features: the Review list and Reminders. The PRACTICE mode has five activities: choose definition, choose word, choose missing word, spell missing word, and spell defined word. In the REVIEW mode all study and practice activities can be used either with a given 20-word vocabulary lesson or, with a list of words self-selected by the student for further study.

The findings indicate that individualized vocabulary learning on the computer will almost certainly facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, this increased vocabulary knowledge is very likely to have a significant positive effect on reading comprehension, and rate of speed for frequent word recognition. Thus, this study indicates clear and positive findings in support of such pedagogical method because a large benefit was gained for a rather small amount of time. Decrease in reaction time for frequent word recognition also contributes to successful reading comprehension. Yang's (1997) experimental study demonstrated that a rather small amount of focused exposure to vocabulary items results in the subjects achieving automaticity in recognizing these words. It would appear that second language learners do not need explicit training in speed of recognition in order to achieve automaticity of word recognition; instead they appear to need systematic focused exposure to L2 vocabulary to achieve such a goal. The acquisition of this high frequency vocabulary should lead to greatly improved comprehension of a written text. Then students can be encouraged to engage in substantial amounts of reading in order to put all this vocabulary knowledge into use as also argued by Mezynski (1983).

Individualized instruction on the computer appears to be a highly efficient method for learning the most frequent words since learners tend to know different subsets of the highly frequent vocabulary, limiting the likelihood of effective group instruction (Coady et al., 1993). Furthermore, it is also beneficial since it is done outside of class without utilizing precious classroom time. Thus, based on the current research findings it is highly recommended that second language learners should be taught the first 2,000-3,000 words as quickly as possible by direct vocabulary instruction.

Based on the research findings, I designed a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) class, which can be implemented in intensive foreign language programs.

CONFERENCE THEME: This research takes into account how research findings can be integrated into practice and how this integration can be evaluated afterwards.

Keywords

Vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, speed of word recognition, computer assisted language learning (CALL) class

Bio Data

Anjel Tozcu has a Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching from the University of Arizona. Currently she works as an Associate Professor at the Defense Language Institute. Prior to joining the faculty at DLI, she taught at various universities including Duke University and North Carolina State University. She has publications on bilingualism, bi-literacy, and computer- assisted language learning. Her research interests lie in vocabulary acquisition, reading, literacy and computer-assisted instruction.

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Interactive Whiteboard: Does it Employ the Seven Principles of Effective Teaching in Foreign Language Classrooms?

Abstract

This study investigates if interactive whiteboards employ the seven principles of effective teaching proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) to teach integrated reading and listening comprehension in foreign language classrooms. The assumption behind these principles is that effective teaching practices encourage contact between students and faculty; develop reciprocity among students; encourage active learning; give prompt feedback; emphasize time on task; communicate high expectations; and respect different learning styles. Data was collected through systematic classroom observations and questionnaires at Defense Language Institute. The findings indicate that interactive whiteboards appear to employ the seven principles of effective teaching for integrated listening/reading comprehension.

Short Paper

This study investigates if interactive whiteboards employ the seven principles of effective teaching proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) to teach integrated reading and listening comprehension in foreign language classrooms. It adopts and explores the rationale of the seven principles of effective teaching and learning in colleges and universities proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987; Chickering and Reisser 1993, pp. 373-378; Graham et al., 2000, p. 2; Graham et al., 2001). These principles constitute a popular framework to evaluate teaching in traditional, face-to-face courses, and are guidelines for administrators, faculty members, and students to improve teaching and learning. These guidelines rest on 50 years of research in higher education on the way teachers teach and students learn (Chickering and Gamson, 1987, p. 1), how students work with each other, and how students and instructors communicate with each other. They constitute the basis for the *Inventories of good practice in undergraduate education* (Chickering et al., 1989), which aim at improving the undergraduate education as well as helping faculty members, departments, colleges and universities examine individual behaviours and institutional practices for their consistency with *seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education.* They are also part of a study supported by the American Association for Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States, and The Johnson Foundation.

The assumption behind these principles is that effective teaching practices encourage contact between students and faculty; develop reciprocity and cooperation among students; encourage active learning; give prompt feedback; emphasize time on task; communicate high expectations; and respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

According to Chickering and Gamson, frequent student-faculty contact is characterized as one of the most important factors in student motivation and involvement. It helps students keep on working as well as reinforces "students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans."

Reciprocity and cooperation among students is characterized as a team effort, which enhances learning. Good learning is "collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated." Working with others often increases student involvement in the learning process. "Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding."

Active learning takes place when students talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to their past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. "Students must make what they learn part of themselves." They do not learn much when they just sit in classes, listen to their teachers, memorize pre-packaged assignments, and then spit out answers.

Providing prompt feedback is very important because "knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning." Learners need to be given appropriate feedback on their performance to benefit from courses. At the outset, students need help in assessing what they already know. In the classroom, students need to perform and receive feedback for improvement. They need opportunities "to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves."

Time on task is characterized as effective time management. "There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike." The allocation of realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty members. How an educational institution defines time expectations for its students, faculty and staff can establish "the basis of high performance for all."

Communicating high expectations are important for everyone –"for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations for themselves and make extra effort" since when you expect more, you will get more.

Respecting diverse talents and ways of learning is very critical to student learning because they all bring different talents and styles of learning. "Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory" (1987). Students need to be provided with opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them since they all have different learning styles and strategies and approach learning tasks differently.

Data was collected through systematic classroom observations and questionnaires completed by the faculty at Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, California.
The findings of the study indicate that the interactive whiteboard appears to employ the seven principles of effective teaching proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) to teach listening and reading comprehension in an integrated way and seems to be a useful pedagogical multi-media tool to interact with digital media in a multi-person learning environment.

CONFERENCE THEME: This research takes into account the selection, integration and evaluation of ICT in language learning and instruction as well as teacher training.

Keywords

Interactive whiteboard, effective teaching and learning principles, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, skill integration

Bio Data

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Choosing Words and their Order for Vocabulary CALL

Abstract

Vocabulary CALL developers need to take decisions on which words to teach and in which order. The highly polysemous nature of many words, especially the most frequent English words and the fact that English is rich in multi-word units are two reasons that make these decisions more complex than they might seem.
Modern frequency lists do not separate the various senses of polysemous words, resulting in somewhat misleading frequency bands for vocabulary. Given that the most frequent words are also the most polysemous, and that polysemy increases the learning burden, many decisions have to be taken on an insecure basis.

Short Paper

When vocabulary is taught through a CALL program, a number of factors need to be taken into account. The developers have to decide which words to teach, in which order to teach them and how often to repeat and vary the vocabulary items that come up for practice. We know that words are best learnt in context and then repeated at increasingly longer intervals to aid long-term retention. We also know that it makes sense for language learners to concentrate on the high frequency words first, in order for them to quickly reach a level where they can master basic communication (Nation 2001). With the rise of large-scale corpora, such frequency information on words has become widely available, and frequency bands are now often used by materials developers. A third factor that needs to be taken into account is the learning burden for individual lexical items. Not all words are equally hard or easy to learn for every group of learners. Speakers of related languages will generally have a lighter learning burden than those who speak unrelated languages. Words that are difficult to pronounce or spell have a higher learning burden. And words with more than one meaning require more effort from the learners as well.

For the development of vocabulary CALL material for English as a foreign language, this third factor is both crucial and very problematic. The highly polysemous nature of many words, especially the most frequent English words and the fact that English is particularly rich in multi-word units are two reasons that warrant caution in this context as polysemy and phraseology both present problems for the process of calculating the frequency of individual words.

For the establishment of word frequency, the orthographic word is used. Counting multi-word units such as phrasal verbs, collocations and idioms is quite complex (and not often done for frequency calculations) as their parts do not necessarily occur contiguously in a text. The verb element of *blow up* thus accounts for a large part of the occurrences of the word *blow*, resulting in a distorted picture of frequency. Word senses appeared separately for the entries in the classic learners' word list, West's (1953) "General Service List", but modern frequency lists rely on methods developed in corpus linguistics and these do not include separating out the various senses of polysemous words. All senses of a word are thus counted as a single item. This distorted frequency information is then used to decide which frequency band a word is placed in and consequently when in the EFL course a word will appear.

For a CALL program, the number of necessary repetition cycles can safely be made into a

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function relating to the learner knowing or not knowing a particular word. But the developers will need to provide considerably more practice material for a vocabulary item that has more than one morphological form and several subsenses (e.g. *to raise*) than for a word that has a stable form and basically only one meaning (e.g. *unemployment*). Given that the most frequent words are normally polysemous, and that polysemy increases the learning burden, especially for those learners whose native language has a diverging patter of polysemy (cf. French *temps* – English *time* or *weather*), a substantial number of decisions have to be taken on the basis of rather shaky groundwork of frequency lists and incomplete knowledge about polysemy.

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Keywords

Vocabulary CALL, frequency bands, polysemy

Bio Data

Cornelia Tschichold works as a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Swansea University in Wales. She worked on a grammar checker for non-native speakers, and on the treatment of English multi-word units in computational lexicography. Her current research interests include the acquisition of vocabulary and phraseology and computer-assisted language learning (CALL).

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When CALL is the Better Choice

Abstract

This presentation focuses on research which appears to indicate that especially the lower-middle students benefit from computer-assisted instruction. The high-achievers do well irrespective of instructional method. The low-achievers continue not to do well, irrespective of instructional method. However, those students who are placed between the bottom and the middle do much better than expected (i.e. they are able to break the ranking) when the instruction is computer assisted than they are able to do in the traditional classroom.

Short Paper

Introduction

The issue of CALL efficiency has been a matter for debate in various contexts. At times the arguments for or against have been theoretical and pedagogical analyses or statements of opinion while in other cases actual studies have been conducted of particular applications of CALL in a learning environment (Chapelle, 2001, 2003; Kleinmann, 1987; Nagata, 1996). In the survey conducted by Hubbard (2003) on important CALL research questions, the response from the participating researchers worldwide placed the effectiveness issue as a major category of interest with comparative studies being the second largest category (ibid, pp. 141 and 150). Hubbard concludes: "More than two decades after the microcomputer entered the domain of language teaching and learning, a substantial percentage of CALL experts continue to be concerned with the degree of its effectiveness in general as well as its effectiveness relative to specific alternatives" (ibid, p. 151). The present paper represents a continuation of that interest in the sense that efficacy is at the centre. The core, however, has its focus not on the general efficacy of the method or tool but on the learning potential for the various achievement groups.

The bulk of CALL studies have experimented with acquisition of the major skills of language learning as well as limited objectives within particular areas of morphology, syntax and vocabulary. Few studies have focused on the various achievement groups and their learning outcome. Rather, studies have been evaluated from an object-oriented angle while comparing mean results. The present study looked at student achievements from the additional perspective of the individual students and their attainment group placement.

Rationale

The study was carried out at the English department at the University of Southern Denmark with advanced learners of English as a foreign language. These students had received pre-university instruction in English for six to eight years. Their communicative competence would be considered relatively good. In more concrete terms, this means that they would be at the European Framework level of B2 when entering university.

Primary and secondary education tend to focus on communicative competence, and as stated by Garrett: "In its original sense, communicative competence certainly includes grammatical competence, but unfortunately the term *communicative competence* is now widely understood in language pedagogy to mean the ability to communicate; to get meaning across" (1995:350). This leaves university language programmes with the task of introducing students to the formal linguistic aspects of language and a metalinguistic syllabus.

In order to help the students in their struggle with the linguistic concepts, the syllabus has incorporated various modules and facilitative measures, among them a computer tool for the acquisition of syntax (Visual Interactive Syntax Learning). This tool is now web-based and available at www.visl.hum.sdu.dk . The site offers several and varied interfaces which allow the students a number of choices in their work. There is a tree-diagram building interface, several games, various modes of tagging, free input of text (pasted or typed), quizzes, and translation tools. The underlying pedagogical approach is that of problem solving.

Results

The results reported in this presentation emerged as a subtheme from a larger study investigating computer- assisted acquisition of the formal aspects of language learning. The participants in the study were subjected to an initial pre-test and a subsequent post-tests after a treatment period of ten weeks. The learning outcome was measured for effect of instructional uptake of the syllabus content, i.e. syntactical structures and grammatical concepts. In addition, the effect on production was measured through grammaticality judgements. The study was a conducted with parallel tracks comprising computer-assisted as well as non-computer instruction.

	Computer group (n=13)		Non-computer group (n=14)	
Success rates quartiles	% of computer subjects Pre	% of computer subjects Post	% of non-computer subjects Pre	% of non-computer subjects Post
100-75	0.00	61.54	0.00	14.29
75-50	30.75	23.08	21.43	50.00
50-25	53.85	7.69	42.86	21.43
25-0	15.38	7.69	35.71	14.29

Table 1 Ranking quartiles – according to achievements before (pre) and after treatment (post).

The results presented here were analysed with a focus on the various achievement groups in relation to the instructional method. The overall learning effect, when studied with respect to mean values, was good regardless of instructional method albeit with an advantage for the learners in the computer group.

However, the fact is that in order to learn more about the value of the computer tool and the ways in which it can best be put to use cannot be read from means tables. The inspection of the individual placements in a ranking table revealed a pattern that had escaped the analysis of the learning variables.

The students who do well (i.e. above 50% in the pre-test) turn out to have little trouble sustaining their top-ranking irrespective of instructional method. The interesting groups are those whose attainment level was below the 50 % mark (pre-test). If it is possible to increase our knowledge of the learning issues applying to these students, then this is where the great reward is to be found from an educational and pedagogical point of view. The detailed analysis of these groups pointed to a difference between the computer-assisted group and the non-computer group (see Table 1). For some reason it seems that the computer is better able to support the learning of those below the middle of the spectrum of achievements. Approximately fifteen per cent of students in the computer group remain below the 50% mark after the experimental period while the equivalent figure for the non-computer group is approximately thirty-six per cent.

This beneficial effect of the application of computers in language learning classes has hardly been described in CALL literature. However, a similar effect was described by Chenu et al. (2007) in their study of the acquisition of relative clauses in French as a foreign language. The reason for this particularly beneficial effect for the less proficient students finds no ready explanation, and the issue certainly needs to be investigated further. In the Chenu et al. study as well as in the present study, the subject matter fell within the area of grammar, and it would be investigate other areas of language learning with this perspective in mind. The causal relations are as yet uncertain.

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Keywords

Metalinguistic knowledge, CALL efficiency for low achievers

Bio Data

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Vocabulary Feedback and Memory Techniques in CALL Software

Abstract

Vocabulary feedback provision strategies in CALL software has been seen in terms of text, picture, sound and video while effectiveness of feedback to memory has been neglected.

Effectiveness of feedback provision strategies in students' short/long-term memory is investigated in relation to students' personal style of language learning. Subjects were offered a text with 16 new vocabulary items evenly distributed. Different hypertext strategies on these terms were offered: half of those were traditional (as in most software) and the other half experimental (trying to engage the students in the learning process). Findings are seen in relation to student preferred mode of receiving feedback, successful feedback for short- and long-term memory, and students' learning styles.

Engaging/activating the learner seems to be beneficial for the learning process and feedback provision strategies need to be carefully designed taking into account learner style characteristics.

Short Paper

Introduction

From the earliest stages of language learning theorising, the notion of feedback and, in particular, its form and its role in second language learning has been discussed and been subject to great debate. Although a great deal has been said about feedback in language learning and teaching in general, comparatively little has been discussed about feedback in CALL software.

Feedback has been seen predominately as a corrective mechanism on two levels: a) Internal and b) External. Internal, is the feedback that is self-generated by the learners as they monitor their engagement with learning activities and tasks. This feedback derives from a comparison between their actual performance and the personal goals the learners have set. External corrective feedback is that received from other learners, the teacher or a co-speaker (diagram 1).

Diagram 1.
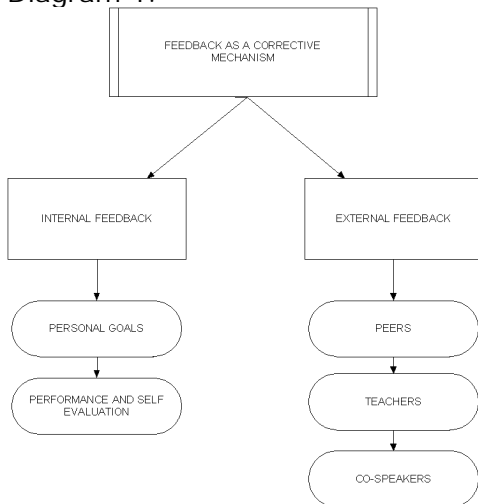
A traditional and typical initial distinction made in corrective feedback is between a) feedback on meaning and b) feedback on form, although most research is inclined to investigate the latter. A second distinction could be made between implicit and explicit correction. On the implicit side there are most feedback types, such as: *Recasts*, *Expansion*, *Repetition*, *Backchannel cues, Metalinguistic* feedback, *Requests for clarification*, *Negotiation*. On the explicit correction side, we have: *Overt Correction*, *Overt Plus* (together with the adoption of one of the implicit types), and *Overt Plus Elicitation*, (peer correction by elicitation).

Notice that all the feedback types that have been described above take place at a productive stage of language learning or acquisition, where learners are expected to produce language and receive feedback on their production of language constructions. In computer didactic software there have been employed various corrective feedback strategies, such as sound-effects, visual effects, voice-overs, text messages and scoring systems.

Feedback as a support mechanism
While, so far, the notion of feedback has been investigated merely as a corrective mechanism, supportive feedback has always been employed by language teachers (and for the past 18 years by multimedia hypertext CALL software) as a way, together with initial input, of reinforcing the learning process. In CALL this typically operates by pressing on a hyperlink in the software, a decision which lies in the hands of the language learner e.g. the learner expresses a question on a new vocabulary item by clicking on it and receives immediate feedback to answer his/her question.

There are two major forces pushing towards an understanding of the notion of feedback as support. One, is the shift of attention in language pedagogy from the teacher to the learner and from teaching to learning which, as a consequence, has had an impact on our understanding of the teacher as a person not only responsible to correct (centre of knowledge) but also to support (pedagogue) the learning process. On the other hand developments in computer hardware and software in terms of hypertext, video, audio, and pictures today allow us to offer a rich variety of feedback in CALL software.

Vocabulary learning feedback strategies as provided by computer software has, to a great extent, been seen in terms of the variety of means provided by the machine i.e. text, picture, sound and video. In consequence, short or long-term effectiveness of the feedback provision strategies employed in CALL software has been neglected.

This study investigates feedback provision strategies and, further, reports on their effectiveness in students' short- and long-term memory in relation to the students' personal style of language learning.

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Method
Subjects, on a preparatory language course to support their university studies, were offered a text divided in three sections containing 16 new vocabulary items which were evenly distributed in it. Different feedback provision strategies on these terms were offered: half of those were traditional (as in most software) and the other half experimental (in a hybrid discussion trying to engage the students in the learning process). At a first stage the subjects were provided with a paper list of the 16 items and were asked to provide equivalents in their first language. This way we identified which items were completely new to them. At a second stage they were offered ample time to go through an electronic text and learn the new items by studying the material that was hyperlinked. At a third stage (after one hour), the paper list with the 16 vocabulary items was again presented to them and they were asked to provide equivalents or definitions of the items they could recall. This last stage was repeated after one week.

The subjects' learning style was also investigated as a control variable to offer insights as to whether it impacts preference or effectiveness in learning.

Analysis
It was initially registered that the 94,1% of the vocabulary items presented to the subjects was totally new to them. The amount of items they could recall after one hour was 70% which dropped to 54,5% after one week. Further, we analysed retention of each vocabulary item separately in order to record any differences related to the strategy it was supported with. It was found that items which kept a high level (between 70% and 90%) of retention were those of which the meaning was transparent (target language – target language morphosyntactic associations), irrespectively of the strategy they were supported with. Similarly, connecting items with target language sound associations proved to be the second best strategy for retention. Depth of processing techniques (where they were employed) proved to be the least successful for both short and long-term retention.

In those items supported by our experimental strategy, feedback retention rose to the levels of 79,9% after one hour as compared to 76,6% of the items supported by the traditional feedback. Surprisingly, items supported by traditional feedback strategies show higher retention after one week 59.9% as opposed to 56,6% of the experimental feedback.

More analysis is pursued in relation to a) student preferred mode of receiving feedback, and c) students' learning styles.

Conclusion
Although it appears from these findings that the study on feedback as a support mechanism will have to continue, it may be concluded at this stage that engaging/activating the learner seems to be beneficial for the learning process and that feedback provision strategies need to be carefully designed taking into account learner style characteristics.

Keywords

Feedback, vocabulary learning, memory techniques

Bio Data

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papers in conferences in Greece, Italy, UK, USA, France, Germany, Poland, Austria, FYROM and Cyprus and acted as a teacher trainer (Greece, Italy, Cyprus and UK) and a consultant for Oxford University Press. He has been a keynote in several occasions in Greece, Italy, Albania and Spain. He organized a conference on ESP and IT at the university of Macedonia (year 2000) and runs a one-year (250 hours) teacher training course on CALL for the past 5 years.

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