STRATEGIES OF DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS USING COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL) PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

English is the language of dominance for the current wave of globalization. The World Wide Web has emerged as the important technology that has made global education viable as well as made virtual Universities possible. It constitutes an incredible resource to teach English by adapting Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) programs with pedagogical applications. It has helped us to understand the nature of the language. This paper explores the use of applications of CALL programs in language skills during the process of learning and teaching. Then how computer programs help students learn the language skills better, and what teachers and students have to do in order to accomplish the language teaching, and learning objectives. It then proceeds to expose them to the methods of self-learning that will help them improve their language throughout their lifetime.

KEYWORDS: Language Skills, Computer Assisted Language Learning

INTRODUCTION

CALL - Computer Assisted Language Learning, an acronym used by teachers and students to use computers for learning the English language course. Computers have been used since the 1960's for computer assisted language learning and teaching. The purpose for using computer assisted language learning include: motivation, experimental learning, enhance student learning, individualization, authentic materials for study, greater interaction, independence from a single source of information, and global understanding. The idea of CALL inculcates a strong emphasis on student-centered lessons, which help the learners to learn on their own using interactive lessons. The important features of these lessons are individualized learning and bidirectional which is called as interactive learning.

CALL PROGRAMS, AN INSPIRATION FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Computer technology provides communication activities which increase the learning motivation for second language learners. Students will be able to send e-mails and chat with people joining chats-rooms. The computer and information technology has brought the most striking change to language assessment which delivers a wide variety of test tasks online anywhere in the world and provides immediate feedback. Recent advances in natural language processing and latent semantic analysis, along with improvement in scanning technology, have made it possible to score tasks both open-ended and responses to composition prompts- by computer. Even a shy student can be benefited from individualized and student centered collaborative learning and also as the studious students may proceed with full potential from working at their own pace.

CALL CAN HELP THE LEARNERS WITH DIFFERENT APPROACHES

In the past English Language teaching was taught by traditional method which was teacher centered with the aid of blackboard, recorders and videos and written texts related to the class. Students found it to get bored and confused. With the help of computers, teachers can present pictures, videos and written texts related to the subject. Students feel things are more real and understandable. There are a wide range of online applications on the Internet which include, pronunciation tutors, dictionaries, encyclopedias, chat-rooms, games and puzzles, grammar and vocabulary quizzes, literary extracts. All these applications are available to use in the foreign language classes. Vocabulary, grammar, reading tests and punctuation, have a prominent relevance to the sub skills that are needed for writing (Duber 2000)[2]. The web is like foreign language classes and a virtual library that can be accessed by the world.

The computer programs incorporate rules of English Language Learning with examples, and answers a series of questions which test his/ her knowledge, and the computer gives appropriate feedback, and awards a mark. Vander plank (2009)[7] states in his review of research on multimedia in the second-language classroom setting, agrees that new technologies have benefited on comprehension, but is concerned with the challenges for the teachers facing on the choices who want to fully exploit digital technology for the students in the language classroom and laboratory. It can communicate with student visually by presenting sound in the form of speech and music, displaying text, graphics or video images on a screen. Even Higgins (1995) [3] opined that the most common means of Communication with the computer is to click on icons with the help of mouse or by typing commands, and responses at a keyboard. It is unique combinations of interactive and visual capabilities in which computers have a constructive effect on learner motivation; besides learning a computer language had more effect on student behavior, and students more enthusiastic.

LISTENING SKILLS

Trudy Wallace, Winifred E. Stariba and Herbert J. Walberg (2008)[6] argue that "Listening Skills are essential for the students in learning as to enable them to acquire insights and information and to accomplish success in communicating with others", so it is important to inculcate good listening skills.

The new technologies of podcasting and vodcasting become potential educational tools today. While ESL teaching has been a challenge to teachers the integration of new technologies, tends to make language teaching rather easy. There are numerous benefits, ranging from providing a portable access to learning context, facility of repeated listening, language presented at a lower speed, exposure to authentic language, learning material tailored to the needs, interests and abilities of an individual to learn at one's own pace. Teachers can use them for providing curriculum related instructional content, create additional materials for fast learners, and provide additional tasks and activities to reinforce the students learning. Jones and Fortescue (1987)[4] argued that such activities not only help to integrate listening and writing skills, but also evaluate learners' listening comprehension skills in a more active way than is generally possible in a non CALL class.

A podcast is an outline, preselected audio on demand delivered through a portable media device such as an IPod or MP3 player where as a Vodcast is an outline delivery of video. Since these are accessible and usable whenever and wherever an individual wants, they are considered to be effective learning techniques.

Using a podcast, vocabulary can be learnt easily by listening to a corpus in which the word occurs gives a contextual meaning, usage and focuses on pronunciation, the subtle differences between synonyms can be demonstrated

through examples of usage through corpus data. Similarly, collocations can be taught using examples of linguistic units presented contextually.

Podcast and Vodcast provide extensive exposure to language and ample practice in comprehension of the target language, students listen to conversations, talk shows, Interviews, stories, and lectures through video and audio. It triggers the respective skills and aids in internalizing language, thus preparing for productive skills of speaking (fluency) and writing.

Podcasts and Vodcasts are the data source of audio or video files (respectively) which are placed on the Internet. It has subscription for downloading. Unlike a simple download or real-time streaming, the subscription feature of automatically delivered new content is what distinguishes pod/vod casts from other media (Schnackenberg, Vega & Warner, 2008)[5].

Video content of oral presentations, debates and group discussions through Vodcast can be used to demonstrate how the speaker can draw the audience's attention express through body language, initiate, take turns, interrupt, agree and support or contradict a particular idea and make a conclusion.

VOCABULARY SKILLS

A concordance is a program. It can be used to detect a particular word or phrase in the text. It is same as word processor: where he/she could find a word or phrase from particular text or phase. Concordancers have been widely used for searching through large collections of texts (hundreds of thousands or million words) taken from British newspapers. It can be used with any other text files available in electronic form. Software as a stimulus category in the computer is used to generate analysis, critical thinking, discussion, and writing. Many collections of such texts are known as 'Corpora'. For effective simulation programs such as "The Animals, Navajo Vacation and Night before Christmas" can be used to develop vocabulary.

In computer Labs, Students are enthusiastically present to participate in Lab speak represent only a small portion of the speech communities that EFL/ESL learners have access to through the use of technology. Crystal (2001) [1]opined that e-mail, chat groups, virtual world, to explore the nature of 'Net speak'.

CHAT PROGRAMS

Chat Programs are available for both text and voice chat. www.skype.com is screen shot of Skype, which has text chat and voice chat. Here you could see your interlocutor, if there is a webcam on your computer. There are free programs available which are more sophisticated which allow video and audio conferencing alongside other tools. One of the best programs is Net Meeting (http://www.microsoft.com/windows/netmeeting). It can be downloaded from the internet Programs like Net Meeting can be used to teach remotely, or as a part of a blended learning solution. Using chat in the classroom can be hugely motivating to the learner. The teacher uses the current technology by using chat programs with the learners in the language learning process, creating a variety of exercises by using a 'new' tool and also inviting new open ups for contacting and communicating with classes in other parts of the world.

HOT POTATOES (MAC PROGRAM)

The hot Potatoes program is the most famous authoring tool. It is the small windows or Mac programs which creates a variety of exercises and it is free to download only for educational purposes (http://hotpot.uvic.ca/). Installing this

program in our computer allows us to create web based exercises such as:

- Short answer

- Jumbled Sentences

- Crossword

- Multiple choices

- Matching /ordering

- Gap fill

INTERACTIVE STORIES

Another area to deal with electronic materials, these resources can be used for practice exercises. Through this one would be involved in creating interactive stories. Here learners read scenarios and then make choices to use certain key points. This website is excellent for reading comprehension practice and small-group discussions that motivates collaborative and critical thinking skills. This would help and encourage learners to develop a wide range of skills from listening to debating and critically analyze making points and support them. As these are basically contained text-driven activities, the students are able to produce them for any level. These samples of these kinds may be used from typical interactive stories. (http://www.halfbakedsoftware.com/quandary/version_2/examples/).

CLARITY SOFTWARE

(Http://Www.Clarityenglish.Com/)

This website has produced English language related products; their authoring tools are both reasonably priced and easy to use. They have Author Plus Pro and Tense Buster programs. It can be used for a variety of different exercises that includes audio, graphics and video content, and let them for the creation of listening comprehension exercises, interactive dictations and presentations. It enables to record, play and save within their interfaces. It also has a sophisticated tracking option for learners that allows seeing your learners' progress through the materials.

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY – SOFTWARE

(http://www.cict.co.uk/software/textoys/index.htm)

Features Quandary and other useful tools including webRhubarb and text reconstruction program called WebSequitor, where learners reconstruct written texts from smaller chunks. All these programs are good, produced by the lead developer of the Hot Potatoes suite as it is discussed above.

QUIA

(Http://Www.Quai.Com/Subscription/)

This website has a subscription-based service which allows the materials for the creation of various types of activities. It can be used for surveys and Web Pages and also for extensive learner tracking options. The site offers a variety of ready-made templates for material creation and the ability to set up a study space for your learners, and also can access to over two million activities which is already in the library.

INTERNET USAGE

The internet helps language learners to communicate directly, economically and conveniently with other learners or speakers of the target language. The internet has a lot to offer the teacher. There are authentic resources in the form of materials, prepared lesson plans, worksheets. It is a place where one can share ideas and thoughts with others teachers around the world.

I would include some internet resources, their links and usage.

Http://www.englishclub.com/

One of the best websites to learn about word stress explains the importance of words stress in English as the key to understand rapid spoken English. It helps to learn and teach English. I.e., students can learn from grammar and worksheets. Teachers can use for materials such as videos, games and chat.

Http://www.usingenglish.com/

Using English.com provides a large collection of English for second Language tool and resources for students, teachers and learners. Topics cover the whole spectrum of the subject areas such as ESL, EFL, ESOL and EAP. Its main purpose is for the academics with latest updates.

Http://www.esl-lab.com/

The above website is filled with lots interactive lessons attached with Real Audio. In this site Lessons are divided by level-easy, medium, difficult. This helps the learners to use it according to their capability. It promotes listening skills of the students. It contains pre-listening and post-listening exercises.

Http://eslus.com/Lessons/Reading/Read.HTM

This website contains mini stories with Cloze exercises, short paragraphs, speed-reading activities with words and extensive reading – such as fiction, the International newspaper, Text adventures, science, law reading exercises, 'read and listen' activities. It improves reading skills through Interlink Language Centers.

Http://www.esl-lounge.com/

It is a site for teachers, containing top 100 lesson plans, blogs, worksheet activities, e-books. It lists out the top websites for educators-re ranked every hour. Exclusive –mp3 listening and many materials serve as the resources.

Http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com

Puzzle maker is a puzzle generation tool for teachers to create and print customized word search, crisscross, and matching using own word list.

Http://www.britishcouncil.org.in/

The British Council connects worldwide with learning opportunities and creates ideas. They help to develop the language skills, experience through English courses, Information resources through Network, Exams, online courses.

Http://www.china232.com/

The teacher can develop his/her skills by listening to free podcasts and videos to improve their daily conservation

or Business English skills. This can be recommended to the students also.

CONCLUSIONS

English language teaching and learning must be done under the perspective that it is not to be taught and learnt but to be trained by the instructor and imbibed by the language learner. Language is a skill and a subject. This paper insists that impact of technology in language learning is inevitable. The rise of the internet and the extensive use of personal computers have ensured that the influence of technology will continue to grow generations will have difficult experiences of the digital world.

Technology can be used to enhance the learning experience. If we teachers utilize these sources and enrich language courses by incorporating all the available sources, it is surely possible to create more effective classrooms and make our students explore the benefits.

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