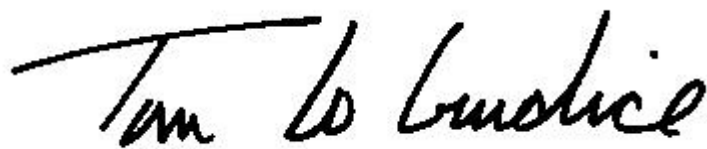


APPLICATION OF TASK-BASED TEACHING APPROACH IN COMPUTER ASSISTED
LANGUAGE LEARNING

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Lo Gustice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

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Zhao Yin (Roy)

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Abstract

APPLICATION OF TASK-BASED TEACHING APPROACH IN COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Zhao Yin (Roy)

Under the Supervision of Tom LoGuidice, Ph.D

Today, the use of computer technology has drawn the attention of teaching community. Over the last few years many schools, colleges and universities in China have experimented with multimedia-based and network-based English instruction. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) is becoming prevalent in foreign language learning and teachers play ever more important roles within this realm. But CALL is still neglected by many teachers and the deficiencies in combining computer with methodology in language teaching led schools and instructor's reluctance to adopt CALL. How can multimedia-based English teaching overcome its ignorance towards students' emotional factor is also a problem the teachers should receive emphasis..

The paper is a report on contents and features of the task-based approach in foreign language teaching, focusing on its practical application in CALL. The work reports on efforts to construct a new mode based on both multimedia teaching and the latest teaching curriculum. The new role teachers should play in the process of students' English learning is explained...

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Chapter One: Introduction

The use of instructional media in the second language classroom has been a common practice for a long time. For instance, educational research investigating the utility of technology for learning and teaching has been continuous for several decades (Almekhlafi, 2006). Tape recorders, VCRs, satellite TV, and some other technologies have all been introduced into the second language classroom. Today, the use of computer technology has kept the attention of the teaching community. It is beyond doubt that computers and the internet can add enormous potential to English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning as teachers and learners know how to make the most of the technology. Several years ago, the potential offered by the machines was covered by visions of classes where students are led by a robotic-looking master that gives instructions. Computer technology developed very fast, so people were afraid that teachers would be replaced by machines and become unemployed. On the contrary, CALL is becoming prevalent in foreign language learning and teachers play ever most important roles within this field. But CALL is still neglected by most EFL teachers in China. They either regard it a waste of time or treat it as a game. The best that could be heard of computers in the English class was that they display colorful images, yet the linguistic content was very poor. Besides, students sat silently in front of computer screens clicking mice and watching what it is happening. The deficiencies in combining computer with methodology in language teaching led schools and instructors reluctance to adoption of CALL in EFL class. Furthermore, the dominated grammar-based examinations in China prevent CALL from developing in EFL class. The prevailing view of computer in language learning is that computers provide colorful pictures and help arouse students' interest for a short time but do little help in improving students' performance in grammar-based examinations.

The key point is not criticism of those who do not believe in a new teaching/learning tool, but presentation of some of the elements of CALL in teaching students English, the challenge teachers are facing in CALL is how to give the classes within the field of CALL at school more usefully and more practically, so that they can solve problems that they may confront in and out of school.

Statement of the Problem

The problem expressed as question is, how to apply task-based approach to CALL?

Definition of Terms

CALL Computer-Assisted Language Learning is used as a way of language teaching and learning in which the computer is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement and assessment of material to be learning. Levy (1997) defines CALL briefly and clearly as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning”. CALL includes computing and language learning. CALL aims to teach students through the multimedia of computer in the language learning process.

Task-based Approach Task-based language teaching is the new development of communicative teaching theory.

Delimitations of Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karman Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over eighty eight (88) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO with Academic Search Elite and Wilson Index as the primary sources. Key search topics included “English teaching”, “multimedia”, and “CALL”.

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the studies of English teaching and CALL learners will be conducted. . The findings will be summarized and recommendations made.

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW

With technological advancement, Internet-based teaching and learning tool have become more versatile, user friendly, and cost effective (Zhao, Alexander, Perrault, Waldman, & Truell, 2009). The Inter-net is being used more than other distance education delivery methods such as interactive TV, mail correspondence, and live-remote location combinations (Hickman, 2003) (Zhao, Whitesel, Truell, & Alexander, 2007). The use of computer technology helps students gain confidence through “learning-by-dong” in an interactive environment.

Introduction of CALL

The history of teaching language by computer can be divided into three stages that include stages: behaviorist CALL, communicative CALL and integrative CALL. Each stage stands for a level of computer technology as well as a pedagogic method.

Behaviorist CALL was based on the dominant behaviorist theories of learning and could be considered as a sub-component of the broader field of Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI). The computer was viewed as a teacher who never felt tired and allowed students to work at an individual pace. Technologies in and of themselves rarely bring about substantial change in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, applications of technology can provide valuable support for modern language teaching (Raya, 2003). That means the computer is a tool to deliver educational materials to students. There are two logical basis of using computer as teacher. Firstly, to repeat the same material is beneficial to learning. Secondly, computer is an ideal tool to carry out repeated materials, because the machine does not feel boring. Because the behaviorist method of language learning had been refused at the theoretical level as well as the pedagogical level, behaviorist CALL was replaced by communicative CALL.

Communicative CALL was based on the communicative way to teach language, which became important in the 1970s and 1980s. -Advocates felt that behaviorist CALL did not allow real communication to be of much value. Underwood gave some “Premises for ‘Communicative ‘CALL’” in 1984 (Underwood, 1984). It focuses more on using forms and teaches grammar clearly. Communicative CALL allows students to learn original language; it does not evaluate what the students have done. Communicative CALL is flexible to students’ answers and it creates an environment in which students feel natural using the target language. But critics point out that the computer makes greater contribution to marginal rather than the language learning process. So many educators begin to find ways to teach interactively.

Task-based, project-based, and content-based approaches all sought to integrate learners in authentic environments, and also to integrate the various skills of language learning and use, i.e. to integrate various skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and also to integrate technology more fully into the language learning process. This stage was termed integrative CALL. The integrative CALL can be regarded as a great advance in CALL activities.

The Advantages of Computer Technology and CALL

One good application of computer-based technology is within educational settings (Kim, Jain, Westhoff, & Rezabek, 2008). Using computer-based technology in educational settings helps students in their learning (Sahin, 2003) (Stinson, 2003) (Whetstone, & Carr-Chellman, 2001). Teachers also improve their instruction by using a variety of technology resources such as the Internet, multimedia CD-ROMs, audio and graphics. There is evidence that suggests teaching with technology provides more benefits for both teachers and students than teaching without any technology.

The current computer technology has many advantages for second language learning (Jonassen, 1996). Computer and its attached language learning programs could provide second language learners more independence from classrooms and allowing learners the option to work on their learning material at any time of the day. And computer technology provides teachers and students with a whole new interactive learning environment to share ideas, information, images, animations, audio or video (Preston, 2008). Students are highly motivated when content is presented on screen. It increases their enjoyment by being physically involved touching and moving objects and by the size of the screen which makes images large enough for everyone to see. The engagement and knowledge building of students is fostered when they are given the opportunity to interact in a physical and mental way in the learning environment (Harlen & Rivkin, 2000). It must be noted that the computer technology itself does not enhance teaching and learning, it is the way that it is used, being another tool teachers can use to increase interactivity in class (Earle, 2004). The real advantages of the computer technology are being seen as teachers explore ways to use this new technology with students mutually developing new teaching and learning strategies resulting in changes in pedagogy (Beauchamp & Parkinson, 2005). Computer technology can be used to integrate experiential activities with discussion and reflection to encourage the growth of coherent understanding (Skamp, 2004).

When teachers attempt to assess students' learning progress, they can get the essential information from a well-designed computer language learning programs and then offer feedback tailored to students' learning needs (Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003). When teachers attempt to assess students' learning progress, they can get the essential information from a well-designed computer language learning programs and then offer feedback tailored to students' learning needs (Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003). When teachers attempt to assess students' learning progress,

they can get the essential information from a well-designed computer language learning programs and then offer feedback tailored to students' learning needs (Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003). When computer technology combines with Internet, it creates a channel for students to obtain a huge amount of human experience and guide students to enter the "Global Community".

Some Effective Teaching Methods Based on Multimedia

PC to Person (Interactive Learning)

The method based on multimedia can realize the interaction between teacher and students, student and student, person and computer.

Figure 1.1

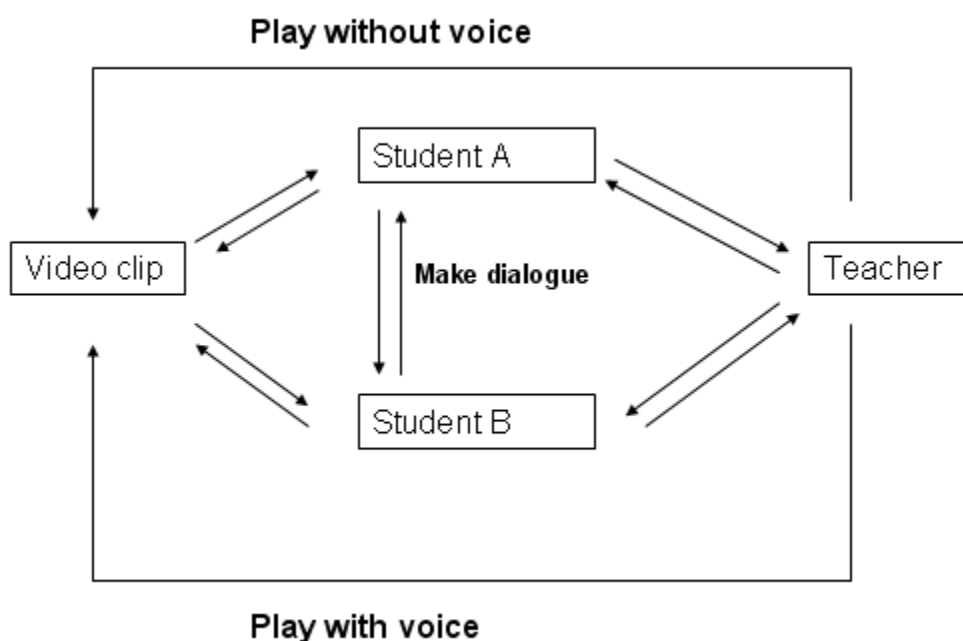


Figure 1.1 shows the interaction between students and teachers, students themselves, individuals and multimedia devices is to initiate language communication in a certain form between students and sound images played by the teacher.

The courseware process is as follows: The teacher chooses the great monologues or dialogues to play without sound and makes students dub based on the scene while watching. Then the teacher plays the fragment again with sound and demonstrates the correct subtitles, making a comparison between the students' dubbing and the original dialogue. In this way, students feel interesting and their language abilities also will be improved. Some educators point out that active learning has several distinguishing characteristics: emphasizing skill development over information transmission, involving the use of higher-order thinking, having students engage in activities, and encouraging student exploration. (Bonnell and Eison, 1991)

Courseware based on Microsoft PowerPoint

Multimedia animation design is not a common skill, but the ability to use a product like Microsoft PowerPoint has become almost universal. Teachers can design a group competition by Microsoft PowerPoint.

Distance Teaching

The internet has reshaped education on all levels and encouraged educators to envision all the possibilities (Shank, 2000). Most universities considered online distance courses to be a crucial part of their long-term strategy. Online education can be synchronous, with teachers and students communicating in real time, or asynchronous, with students working at different times (Cowan, 2009). Some online programs are supplemental, used by students otherwise enrolled in regular classes, while others are full-time, for students working at home.

CAI offers a number of benefits that can be used effectively in distance teaching and especially distance teaching in the formulation of search strategies. These benefits are Flexible scheduling and the ability to tailor courses for each student are the top benefits.

Offering online learning also expands the number of courses available to students and increases their access to highly qualified teachers.

The flexibility of online learning is also a plus for nontraditional students. Students are able to create their own schedules, which is a big help to those with special circumstances, such as teenage parents.

The ability to differentiate teaching and learning for students is a key bonus when using online courses (Davis, M., 2009)

Task-based Teaching Approach

Today, task-based language teaching is advocated. The emphasis of task-based language teaching is “learning by doing”. The task-based approach has been proposed by one of the syllabus models in the last twenty years or so. The syllabus designer designs a requirement analysis which gives a list of the target tasks for the selected learners to carry out. And while those selected learners perform these tasks, they can develop the positive methods of learning the target language and experience the sense of success. Task-based teaching helps develop students’ communicative competence, and enable them to engage in interaction. In the process of the task-based teaching, the learner’s creativity is the most active element. The task-based approach has a richer potential for promoting second language learning than the traditional teaching approach. Task-based language teaching appeared in the 1980s, the basic and initial point of organization is the task. There are many definitions of the term of task; some of them are mentioned as follows: A piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a

communicative act in its own right (Nunan, 1989). An illustration shows that a task is analyzed in terms of its components.

Figure 1.2

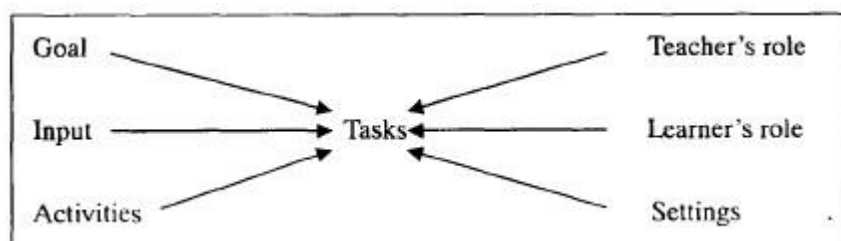


Figure 1.2 Components of a task. Adapted from “Designing tasks for the communicative classroom.” by Nunan, 1989

A task is consisted of six fundamental components, and every component has its own advantages. “Goals” is the first factor, and goals express broadly what the results of a certain experience will be. The second factor is “input”, which refers to many kinds of materials. These materials are objective and can be used in everyday life. Activity refers to the performance of a task itself on the basis of goals and inputs. “Teacher role and learner role” is the most controvertible issue, but in task-based approach, learner role is emphasized. Settings are the social arrangements in which the task is carried out.

Richards, J., J. Platt and H. Weber describe how tasks can be effective for organizing the learning of second language.

A task is an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e., as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use

of variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative. (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1986, p. 289)

Finally, Brown (2001) characterizes task-based curricula differ from content-based, theme-based, and experiential instruction in that the course objectives are somewhat more language-based. . While there is an ultimate focus on communication and purpose and meaning, the goals are linguistic in nature. They are not linguistic in the traditional sense of just focusing on grammar or phonology; but by maintaining the centrality of functions like greeting people, expressing opinions, requesting information, ect(no use of etc.allowed in formal papers)., the course goals center on learners' pragmatic language competence.

Comparison between Task-based Approach and Traditional Teaching Method

A traditional method for language teaching in the classroom usually uses the Presentation-Practice-Production approach. The teacher presents individual language items, and then practices them in the form of spoken, finally gives some exercises to learners. An alternative to the Presentation-Practice-Production approach is the Test-Teach-Test approach. In this method, production stage comes first and learners are asked to perform a particular task. The language presented in the teaching stage can be predicted if the initial production task is carefully chosen, but there is a danger of randomness in this way. Task-based learning is based on three stages. The first stage is the pre-task stage. Teacher introduces the topic, and the learners take part in activities. These activities help students to know some knowledge not only that will be useful in the performance of the main task but also that are necessary to the task. Second stage is called task cycle. In this stage, the learners perform the task in pairs or groups, and then they make a

report for the class on how they did and what conclusion they got. The last stage is the language focus stage. The specific language features from the task are highlighted and the feedback on the learners' performance at the second stage may be appropriate at this point. The main advantage of task-based learning approach is that language is used for a genuine purpose meaning that real communication should take place and that at the stage where the learner can consider language form in general rather than a single form. Task-based learning can be very effective and the methodology needs a change in the traditional teacher's role. The teacher does not introduce and present language in the task cycle stage. The teacher becomes a language informant only in the language focus stage.

Efficiency of Task-based Approach Based on Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Tasks are activities, in these activities, the learners are required to draw and put a range of elements in framework of knowledge and skills. They are characterized by an emphasis on activity, participation and communication among participants through modes and media. Task-based learning gives an alternative to language teachers. In a task-based teaching method, the teacher doesn't pre-determine what language will be studied, the class is based around the completion of a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it.

Chapter Three: CALL in China

Limitations of CALL in China

Some teachers in China think that CALL has some limitations. They give several reasons. CALL affects the students' ability of logical thinking and train of imagination. (Xu tan, 2009)

CALL is different from the traditional language teaching. In the traditional English class, when teacher teaches grammar, sentence structure and text, the experienced teachers will give students enough time to think. And they can some interactive way to arouse students' imagination to language. But CALL courseware takes place the blackboard-writing to a certain extent and it has a powerful function of demonstration. With the lapse of time, students don't want to think but waiting for the answers. CALL courseware is vivid and intuitionist, some teachers convert the abstract words and language into vivid pictures and display the pictures to students. Students will be attracted by the gif pictures and lose their imagination.

CALL is an obstacle of affective interaction between teachers and students. Some teachers only sit at the computer and they teach class looking at the screen. (Qi yue, 2008) Computer control takes the place of teachers' body language and visual communications, which affects the affective interaction between teachers and students. Teachers can not adjust their teaching process and students will lose their interests of learning.

CALL contains too much information and students are difficult to assimilate.(Xu tan, 2009)

Some CALL courseware trivialize the goal and key point of teaching, and they include so much details that students are difficult to achieve that language key points, which affects the purpose of classroom teaching.

Strategies of Realizing the Optimization of Classroom- teaching by Using CALL

In class, teachers teach language by using CALL, they have to pay attention to some strategies. The strategies list as follows:

- Combination of CALL courseware and blackboard-writing. (Wang Qing Qing, 2007) In language teaching, when teachers teach grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure, they should combine CALL courseware with blackboard-writing. They display the key points on blackboard in order to give students enough time to think and write some notes.
- Combination of CALL courseware and some interactive activities. (Gong fang and Yu Yu ping, 2007) CALL courseware contains so much information that teachers feel difficult to control the teaching progress. So teachers should combine CALL courseware with some interactive activities. For example, questions, discussion and dialogue. The interactive activities can liven up the class and enhance the students' comprehension of language points.
- Application of interactivity in CALL. (Qi Yue,2008) The interactivity includes the interactivity between teacher and student, the interactivity among learners and interactivity between students and CALL courseware. In the progress of interactive language teaching, teaching is not only the goal of teaching language but also the goal of training students' abilities— listening, speaking, reading and writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many studies have proved that CALL with appropriate methods arouses more effective learning. Technology alone is not what makes a difference in acquiring a foreign language. It is necessary to use the technology coupled with sound pedagogical principles. Technology is a tool used by the teacher and learner. Foreign language educators, instructional technologists, and foreign language learners should work together to know how technology based materials can be used effectively in a special curriculum. At the same time, the role of the teacher, the role of learner and the role of technology should be taken deep consideration. The teacher not only gives source of information, but acts as facilitator so that students can actively learn and organize the information they are given. Students have become active participants in learning and are encouraged to be explorers and creators of language rather than passive recipients of it.

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