

ON-LINE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

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The Internet has significantly changed every aspects of our lives. As teachers, we acknowledge that it is no longer the matter of how to use technology to teach, but the way the world is developing and the role that online engagement plays in student learning. When the communicative approach became popular, *Communicative Computer assisted language learning (Communicative CALL)* arose around the 80's and 90's. The advantage of this approach to CALL was that new knowledge could be constructed from the learner existing knowledge through exploration, problem solving and hypothesis testing.

The contribution of online teaching of English is further emphasized in the context of an increasing need of online teaching and learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In this paper, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of on-line teaching of English and how teachers of English can get the most out of on-line teaching.

The advantages of on-line teaching of English

According to Ahmad et al (1985), there are three types of advantages of computer in language teaching and learning: “part of inherent nature”, “benefit the teacher” and “benefit the learner” (Ahmad et al 1985:4).

The first type is because computer can manipulate much more activities and powerful in compared with other technological aids: The computer can offer interactive learning by a two-way learning session with the student; the computer can work accurately and precisely with none of errors easily arising from repetition by humans; the computer can create small worlds that highly motivate students to explore and the computer can also provide privacy to students who can “work freely without being too concerned by possible errors whereas in the classroom they would hold back” (Ahmad et al 1985:115).

For the teacher, “the computer can take the drudgery out of teaching by doing all the boring, repetitive work, leaving to the human teacher the more creative aspects of

the job. The computer is an obedient beast and will readily take on the role of drudge if required to” (Higgins and Johns, 1984 as quoted in Panourgia, 2002). Because the computer can control the score, records results, the time spent and much more information for the teacher can view at a later time, the teacher “has the possibility to modify easily the exercises and at the same time can have access to detail information on his pupils strengths, weaknesses and progress, which helps them to assess individual learners” (Panourgia, 2002, p.23).

For students, the computer can motivate and keep learner interest in learning because it provides immediate replies after learners’ responses. Learning with computers, students have full attention and can work at a speed suited to them.

And more importantly, on-line learning ‘offers many advantages because of flexibility of time and the variety of educational courses’ (Panourgia, 2002). The students can choose when and how long to learn particular topics and they also can take courses at a distance.

Research has shown that language teachers have been especially blessed in CALL software and the Internet. A lot of CALL software available such as CALI's *Ellis*, DynEd's *Dynamic English* can bring some benefits to language teaching and learning including: multimodal practice with feedback; individualization in a large class; variety in the resources available and learning styles used; exploratory learning with large amounts of language data; and real-life skill-building in computer use (Warschauer and Healey, 1998).

The CALL software provides language learning activities that help students practice with grammar, vocabulary and especially pronunciation. These programs use speech recognition technology to help students coming closer to the target pronunciation. The power of the computer and competition is also used in most drills including games for the fun factor to motivate language learning. Games are also for collaborative work which encourages students to communicate with the computer and to other peers as well.

In terms of the Internet, according to the same author, “the computer _ both in society and in the classroom _ has been transformed from a tool for information

processing and display to a tool for information processing and communication” and “this communication can be either synchronous (with all users logged on and chatting at the same time) or asynchronous (with a delayed message system such as electronic mail)” (Warschauer and Healey, 1998, p.67).

The disadvantages of on-line teaching of English

Panourgia (2002) also has indicated some disadvantages of CALL as follows:

- ✓ “Ready-made” programs of CALL seem “impose” the curriculum and teaching materials on the teacher.
- ✓ Computer programs need modification, which is not always possible and surely needs a lot of time.
- ✓ Activities to which the computer can contribute are not suited to all activities that go on in the classroom.
- ✓ CALL can not happen with types of activities which require spoken production because computer can not understand the spoken input from the learner.

Showing such considerable disadvantages of the use of computer in language learning, he insists that the role of computer in language learning as a tool “applied by teacher to serve him in teaching and not to replace teacher in class” (p.15).

Teacher’s roles as facilitators when teaching on-line

In order to get the most out of on-line teaching, the CALL teacher has become a facilitator of learning rather than the font of wisdom (Warschauer and Healey, 1998). He has responsibility to “help students to search for, select and organize the information, to manage the time and the studies and to construct knowledge in an autonomous way or in virtual learning communities” (Queiroz, 2003).

As facilitators, as Warschauer and Healey (1998) pointed out, teachers must “in many ways know more than they would as directive givers of information” (p.62). Some requirements for CALL teachers are listed below:

- be aware of a variety of material available for improving students' language skill, not just one or two texts.
- need to know to teach learners to use the material effectively.
- be able to respond to the needs that students have, not just what has been set up ahead of time based on a curriculum developer's idea of who will be in the classroom.

On the other hand, some competencies that the literature mentions for online teachers to deal successfully with the roles of managers and facilitators are:

- be able to use technology;
- have skill to design and implement courses (depending on the applications to be used);
- moderate, organize and archive asynchronous discussions;

(Queiroz, 2003).

Many researchers and practitioners now set the promotion of learner autonomy very important criteria to a basis for computer-assisted language teaching and learning. *Autonomy* is the state in which learners exercise as much control as possible over the learning process and are as little dependent on the teacher as possible (Jones, 2001).

In conclusion, the benefits of on-line teaching of English concern the flexibility of time and location learning and teaching can take place anytime and anywhere which is convenient for both teachers and students; more opportunities to access information for teaching and learning easily. The emphasis of the paper is that teachers need to take a role of facilitator and to promote learners' autonomy which is especially important for learners. Teacher should develop learners' ability of self-direction with learning strategy, which is especially important for L2 learners because there is not always a teacher beside students to give them instructions, particularly in learning language outside the classroom./.

References

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