



Needs for Changes of teaching and learning English

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Abstract

The purpose of this editorial article is intended to provide pre- and in-service teachers with useful suggestions in terms of teaching English in an EFL setting. Because learners of today take in and process information in very different ways, ways of teaching or instructing needs to be differentiated accordingly. In fact, there is no doubt that learners' academic performance and efficacy towards learning is mostly determined by teaching styles of a teacher. In other words, effects or results of learning may be varied based on teaching method. In terms of English education, both pre- and in-service English teachers, therefore, should consider which methods may fit well into the class in order for learners to fulfill the ultimate goals of learning English. This paper proposes how and why to adapt computer assisted learning.

Indexing terms/Keywords

English education; ESL; EFL; paradigm.



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Current Situations and Problems of English Education in Korea

Currently, one of the popular mainstream teaching methods in English language teaching in Korea is definitely communicative language teaching (hereafter 'CLT'). It has been also in prolific use around the world. Basically, CLT makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. However, it shows some limitations in realizing the goals of CLT in a Korean context, where the chances for real-life communication necessitating English are very limited because of little amount of exposure time in a daily life.

Furthermore, most of the Korean teachers of English seem to have a similar opinion in realizing CLT goals, because many of them lack of experiences in using English in an authentic communication setting by themselves. The English education field cannot stay in the traditional tracks where the teacher is the center of teaching and learning, with one-way delivery from teacher to the students. It appears so clear that this pattern of delivering a lecture does not seem to be valid or appealing any more to today's learners. Nowadays, learners are challenged to find what they need for themselves, which requires a method by which to orient themselves to experiential and autonomous learning. Thus, a paradigm shift in teaching English should take place in the learning environment where students are empowered by the teacher who, now, takes the roles of helper, facilitator, consultant, and trouble-shooter, rather than spoon-feeder. Learners are expected to explore what is required on their own. Furthermore, they are expected to cooperate with others around the world, beyond traditional constraints of time and space using a variety of learning resources.

Then, what would be the solutions to fulfill the needs of each learner?

In fact, many English teachers and L2 researchers have been paying attention to using computer technology as an alternative way to facilitate English language teaching and learning. However, it is true that the use of computer technology in the class has been confined to add-on activities to complement traditional classroom activities, since teachers are not fully aware of how to use the computer technology to enhance learners' ultimate goal of CLT, 'communicative competence.' Therefore, a full-fledged approach of using computer technology for the enhancement of communicative competence seems to be required at this point. More specifically, the types of projects and tasks which can effectively promote communicative competence need to be identified and elaborated upon in order to apply them to English language teaching in Korea as well as in EFL situations.

Plus, in light of the ongoing changes toward education, and the gradual dominance of English across the world, Korea has an undoubtedly considerable constraint in that there are few places to speak or practice English for a communicative purpose. Thus, now is a crucial time to reflect on language goals and teaching methods. The task of an educational curriculum planner is to examine changed needs and to determine what goals and methods might be most suitable for its educational system. Many teachers acknowledge that education can never be completely fulfilled within the confines of the school building. Likewise, the role of the teacher constitutes only one part of this fulfillment. The focus of teachers as an entity on knowledge accumulation and its transmission seems to be mistaken from the viewpoint of the current fast-changing society, where an ever-increasing amount of new knowledge is produced and codified day by day.

Implementing CALL in the Korean EFL Classroom

Today, we are facing the rapid change of teaching and learning paradigm in foreign language education, but the reality of educational system in terms of learning English as a foreign language still seems to be stuck in the past. With respect to this problem, several years of being a Korean teacher of English have made me reflect on and trace the paths that were taken during time as a teacher and time as a student. The biggest agony haunting me was, "Do I have to follow the ways my predecessors guided me while I was a student?" My answer was, definitely, "no." The frustrations of not being able to get across what we meant in real situations, combined with the realization of the great differences between the English language in the classroom and that same language in a real life, were both considerably embarrassing and disappointing.

Many changes have come about in the teaching and learning environment in the advent of the digital era. As a result of these changes, the responsibility of current teachers seems to be to lead students to the level where they do not feel embarrassment when they encounter real communication in authentic situations. For this purpose, I think the learners need to be guided to realize the true purpose of learning English, and to set further goals to accomplish good spoken and written communication, not for rote learning. One aspect of this circumstance is generally considered to be the use of computer technology, particularly "network for communication." In terms of technology facilities for education, Korea enjoys a teeming level of opportunity, with cutting-edge facilities at schools across the country. More than 90% of the educational institutions around the nation seem to have excellent, well-networked computers. A problem exists, however, even with this abundant potential. The appropriate use of computers by teachers for language teaching is rarely learned, much less mastered. Teachers seem to have few ideas how these excellent, well-networked computers can be applied to language teaching and learning with efficacy. Networked computers can provide Korean learners of English avenues by which they may evade the traditional, triangular trap of simple pair works, monotonous memorization of sentences, and rehearsed conversations.

From the perspective of theory, on the other hand, it is high time to explore an alternative or supplementary approach for Korean learners to deviate from inefficient, old-fashioned methods of teaching and learning, and to move on to the new methods for authentic communication, which invite real interactions and negotiations. They can, through these new methods, exert themselves to acquire a life-long tool that will help them function with confidence as a member of the international community, and to feel safer to some extent in language exchanges.



Therefore, I think the adoption of computer technology, more specifically, Computer-Assisted Language Teaching needs to be proposed as an alternative platform where desired pedagogical goals can be accomplished, such as negotiation, interaction, interpersonal and intercultural exchange, and so on. The newly proposed CALL environment is expected to give more opportunities for teachers' and learners' survival probability. Van Lier (2001) quotes: "Teachers won't survive, and schools will become increasingly irrelevant, if teachers don't change their style of teaching." Even though it may be an initial step, it deserves study, since it has great potential for rapid expansion.

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Author' biography

Tecnam Yoon is currently a faculty member at Chuncheon National University of Education in Korea. He has a keen interest in the application of new technologies to foreign language learning, using interactive multimedia, web-based language learning, or CALL/MALL software. He is also interested in developing multimodal media literacies and alternative pedagogies.

