TEACHING ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO STUDENTS OF TAKASAKI CITY UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS, TAKASAKI, GUNMA PREFECTURE
- IN CALL SETTING

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I. Self-Introduction and introducing Takasaki City University of Economics

I am from Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan, which is one hour away from Tokyo Station by a commuting train. I am a part-time English instructor of four universities. Everyday I commute to one of four universities. Commuting four universities in a week is a little confusing to me. The furthest university that I teach is Takasaki City University of Economics (T.C.U.E.), Takasaki City.
Today I chose Takasaki City University of Economics for my research. My students are majoring in Regional Politics. In the Regional Politics Department, some students would like to have careers in the local government offices. As a matter of fact, T.C.U.E. belonged to Takasaki City Hall until the school year of 2010. The students are required to acquire the certain level of English skills of TOEIC. Takasaki City is in the center of Joetsu and Shin’etsu Region. Thus, Tourism Department has been established in the university recently. Now the university encourages the students to improve the students’ English proficiency more and better.

The Takasaki City Hall included the budget for the CALL System in 2008. It was about 100 million yen, approximately US $1,250,000. There was only one CALL classroom until the school year of 2009, but now there are five CALL classrooms in total. By now we have various compulsory English classes until junior year. However, it is challenging for the instructors encourage students to study English due to the students’ low motivation. The students are mostly from the local cities in Japan. They hardly have encounters with the native speakers of English until graduating high school except that the A.L.T. (Assistant Language Teachers). We have following compulsory English classes: Oral English, Internet English, Practical English, and Presentation English. I teach ‘Oral English.’ The students in every class are ranked by TOEIC IP test before all the classes begin.

By the way, due to Tohoku Major Earthquake and the nuclear power plant damage, the use of the electricity in college is challenging. The T.C.U.E. could not start the class for two weeks since the spring semester has begun in April. The spring semester also ended two weeks earlier than usual. I appreciate this opportunity to give this presentation as we are thankful for your supports from all over the world.

II. Students Assessment:

Let me assess the students. They had been studying grammar, reading, and writing of English for their entrance examinations of universities, yet they had almost no chance to acquire listening and spoken English skill in school. That is unfortunate. Their intelligence to write and read English is high, but they don’t utilize their English proficiency to listening and oral communication. In order to solve this problem, the faculty and the part-time instructors have been working on the CALL classrooms. On the other hand, the students’ responses are on challenge.
III. Needs Analysis:

The students who are majoring in the Regional Policy are wondering why they are required to study English for communication. It’s challenging to tell them the cross-cultural communication with ethnic people. Thus, it is my responsibility to tell them how it is enjoyable to get to know the diversity of people. In my college and graduate college in the U.S., there were local supporters of international students. That means much to me of my cross-cultural understanding. Similarly, it’s grateful for my proposal to be accepted at the ASIA TEFL CONFERENCE for me to get in touch with people across the diverse culture.

IV. Description of a Scenario to Depict an Identified Problem/Challenge Area for E.L.T. Planning the curriculum

Considering the students’ academic needs of English, I chose the following ways to improve their spoken and listening skills. The followings are my scenario in this year’s syllabus. The faculty chose the “Firsthand 1” by Pearson-Longman.

In order to help them speak smoothly in pair-work, I use the CALL system. I use the pair-work function at random. Then, freshmen have fun to talk with unknown classmates to start with. They have more positive attitudes to speak in class. That is what I am aiming for. For the listening skills, I use the internet. I show T.V. news from the U.S. media like CNN, ABC, and CBS in class. Because the news anchors speak so fast that the students do not understand the context. However, this experience helps them to improve their English skills. The students will catch up with the questions in their textbooks and questions in the E-learning. That’s my scenario.

The E-learning lessons show another choice for them to improve their proficiency levels. The E-learning is software to raise students’ English proficiency. There is more E-learning software of every computer on campus.

I give them a role play test every semester. In this semester, according to the March 11th mega earthquake and the shortened semester, I was unable to give them such a test. I will now show my students’ English level through the DVD. In class the accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation
are important as well as fluency. I have my students evaluate their performance level through their subjective view. Their evaluating efforts are O.K. for my assessments.

V. How to use the CALL classroom more effectively.

There are positive and negative points in order to use CALL classrooms more effectively. There are three positive points. Firstly, they can change partners as much as possible using such a function key. That way, they get used to listen to the spoken English. Secondly, students can record the voice of the native speakers of English to their USBs through CD, DVD, and MP3, which can be taken home. It is very useful since there are not many native speakers of English around their environment. Also, we have opportunities of listening to native speakers on the internet. Thirdly, through E-learning, students can study English whenever they want to study on campus or at home. However, there is a negative point. It is costly to equip the CALL System in class. Not everyone can take advantage of its system. Also, without an access to computers, students cannot access to the E-learning software.

VI. How the researchers and language instructors can facilitate CALL classrooms.

I would like to introduce some research papers how the authors guide the CALL instructors. My interest is in the pedagogy and philosophy. There are four language skills in the language acquisition. In my CALL class, I am teaching speaking and listening skills. Thus, I only suggest from such a point of view.

First, I will discuss the media as internet. Which, in my class, shows E-Learning? According to Debra Hoven (2006),

“...in order to make the most from the use of these new sites of media interaction in language learning we need to develop flexible and adaptive learning environments which can incorporate more traditional forms of instructional CALL as well as the newer communication, collaboration, and exploration forms.”

Felix (2002), for example, makes the following observations in relation to Internet use for language learning and teaching:

“One thing that it is essential to realize is that the most interesting part of what is
happening on the Web …the critical difference… between content and connectivity… A realistic assessment of Web-based teaching is that it is not a time-saving approach, but rather a time-shifting one. Teachers will save on the time they would otherwise spend preparing elaborate materials, but they will also have to invest time in assisting in the organization of tasks and projects, moderating communication, and creating sound assessment strategies. (p12)

Debra Hoven concludes as follows:

“Therefore, while the technology continues to develop, change and expand its uses so unpredictably fast, teachers employing technology to mediate teaching and their learners’ learning need to work on developing a flexible and adaptive pedagogy that suits their teaching philosophies and fits with the teaching and learning environments within which they work. As part of this flexibility and adaptability, we need to examine and reflect on the new personal and learning-strategies that both learners and teachers themselves need to develop.

As we move towards offering an increasing range and variety of online, technology-mediated, and self-access language-learning materials, it is important to remember and consider the needs of learners in actually utilizing these materials. In particular, learners’ awareness of their own learning styles and strategies and how appropriately they can apply them are critical to their success in using CALL/CMC materials for language learning.”

Secondly, I will talk about the CALL instruction with secondary school students and teachers in Malaysia. According to Daud,

“… the uncertain nature of CALL methodology drives some of them away. In the case studies that I carried out in Malaysia, most teachers expressed their problems in coping with the technical aspects of CALL. The different types of computers confused them. The lack of software to answer the students’ needs is another factor that shut them off from CALL. Above all, they were skeptical about the possibility of integrating CALL into the curriculum.”

There were three different races mainly Chinese, Malay, and Indians in the class that Daud researched. In class English, the target language was used very rarely.
Unfortunately, when this paper was published, teachers in the secondary schools in Malaysia had not have skills of their CALL class.

“This might make the teacher feel insecure in handling their CALL classes. This also means that teachers have to plan their lessons well if they intend to use the computer at all, and not use them just to fill in their time slot. This, however, entails that more time would have to be allotted for lesson preparation which not all teachers can afford to do. This is one of the drawbacks of using this approach.”

This result implies the followings:

“The different demands that the use of computers might have on the teachers might call for special CALL methodology training.”

Thirdly, the urban secondary school setting in Malaysia again is evaluated. According to Muhammed(2009), critical assessment and decisions by schools leads to successful implementation of CALL(CLE) program.

There are positive findings:

“It may have helped a little in terms of exciting the school to use multimedia but on the whole they would learn more by reading other materials…” “It appears that the use of computers for learning and teaching English languages in the school has brought about fresh and stimulating experiences for both students and teachers.”

There are negative findings:

“The school administration underestimated the power of retraining of teachers to refresh and upgrade teachers’ knowledge and skills of handling CLE, and then use those knowledge and skills to construct new pedagogical ways of maximizing the CLE, and then use those knowledge and skills to construct new pedagogical ways of maximizing the CLE to support students’ learning.”

Thus, the author suggests the followings*

(1) Increase the number of license of CLE program
(2) Put in place a proper school-level monitoring system that captures the progress of the students
According to Chappelle (1998),

The designers and developers of CALL should also bear in mind the “hypotheses about ideal conditions for second language acquisition” (p. 21) that are derived from the research of second language acquisition. They need to take into account the language learning and teaching involves students and teachers from various backgrounds and abilities, contexts and learning situations, and motivation and beliefs as demonstrated by the students and teachers in this study.

Lastly, there is an investigation of a required CALL class which combines theory and practice in a Linguistics MA program. According to Kessler (2010), “It may be beneficial to have students engage in CALL-based constructivist activities that help them to recognize the unanticipated roles they may assume as well as the potential for language practice.” Accordingly, “First generation CALL teachers who are confident using technology in their personal lives tend to recognize the potential for CALL, but they tend to overlook very simple or obvious solutions or contexts in which extant technology may enhance language learning …. Focusing instruction on a student-centered, constructivist environment helped all students to recognize the contributions that CALL can make to teaching.”

VII. CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude as follows: The language instructors should have training for CALL classrooms. We have a workshop in every March at T.C.U.E. However, the language instructors should have more workshops in an academy institution such as L.E.T.(The Japan Association for Language Education and Technology.) as this IT trend proceeds more and more. Then, we feel confident in class when we stand in front of students.

（ふくおか えつこ・高崎経済大学地域政策学部非常勤講師）
# 2008 TOEIC TAKERS RESULTS

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<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>APPLICATION #S OF THE EXAMINEES</th>
<th>APPLICATION #S OF THE EXAMINEES - ACTUAL #</th>
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* the average growth betw’n the freshman and the current year
** those who took the credits of these classes
REFERENCES

APPENDICES
I. TOEIC Scores Comparison Charts in Year 2008 and 2010 for students majoring in Regional Policy at Takasaki University of Economics.
   See the attached Excel print.
II. TESOL’s Technology Standards for Language Teachers
   Goal 1: Language teachers acquire and maintain foundational knowledge and skills in technology for professional purposes.
   Goal 2: Language teachers integrate pedagogical knowledge and skills with technology to enhance language teaching and learning.
   Goal 3: Language teachers apply technology in record-keeping, feedback, and assessment.
   Goal 4: Language teachers use technology to improve communication, collaboration, and efficiency.