
Communicative CALL Activities in the Thai Context

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Abstract

Active CALL activities were tested with twenty-two first-year science students attending the general Foundation English course at Chulalongkorn University in 1991. The students felt that these activities helped them to improve vocabulary and reading skills as well as grammar. Apart from these linguistic skills, the CALL activities enabled them to co-operate, use a word processor and learn more about the world. Among the various activities, songs were the students' favorite.

Technology cannot replace good language teachers. On the other hand, any profession that tries to ignore the potential of computers is in danger of becoming irrelevant in a short time. The teaching of English is no exception. The only question is to what extent a language teacher can benefit from the use of computers.

Many computer-assisted language learning (CALL) programs have been introduced in the ESL/EFL field. Most of them are "program-controlled" or "magister" to use Higgins' term (1988). He classified this type of CALL as one which "directs students' learning; has authority to evaluate, praise, censure; structures the order of events; explains rules; gives examples; and repeats endlessly." (Chapelle, 1990:201).

Underwood (1984) distinguished "noncommunicative CALL" from "communicative CALL." The former refers to a program that incorporates grammatical sequencing and informs students of their errors. The subject matter is not related to students' interests and the lessons are predetermined. Communicative CALL, on the other hand, refers to the type of program that does not impose grammatical sequencing. The students are in control and can choose their own subject matter. They also create their own learn-

ing experience and perceive the task as a motivating activity (Chapelle, 1990).

Malcy (1989) and Wresch (1991) have illustrated that communicative CALL activities can be used at various levels and with different language skills. These activities can be used by teachers who show concern and respect for their students and a willingness to explore new methods. Although the computer has been introduced in English language teaching classes in Thailand, most programs are of the "noncommunicative CALL" type and none have been generated by the students themselves.

Based on the belief that the classroom is the best place to try something new so that students can best benefit from the course, computer application has been tested with twenty-two first-year science students of Chulalongkorn University who took the Foundation English course from November 1990 to February 1991.

The objectives of the experiment were to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do students benefit from the use of computers in the English class?
2. What type of activities do they prefer?

The Study

Students, Course, and Materials

Twenty-two first-year science students who took the Foundation English course participated in this study. The students had been studying English for at least six years.

The Foundation English course is the first required course for all first year students. The objectives of the course are:

1. to help students to read passages from various English newspapers, encyclopedias, magazines, and brochures, and be able to identify main ideas and understand details,

2. to teach students to write notes, letters, summaries, and paragraphs based on given information and guidelines, and

3. to guide them to use English appropriately to fulfill certain communicative functions.

The materials consist of two components: The "teaching materials" and the "learning materials." The former are the core materials used by every teacher and the latter are designed to help students further practice the language functions studied in class.

Since cooperative learning has been reported to be successful with Thai students (Prapphal, 1991), this method together with the application of computer usage was tested with the Foundation English course from November 1990 to February 1991.

Procedures

Five activities to be used with the Word Star computer program were introduced to the students during the first hour. They were 1) Interviews, 2) Places, 3) Songs, 4) News, and 5) Famous People (See Appendix). The students were asked to form their own groups, ranging from two to four. Each group had to do these assignments on their own in the Resource Center. The time for group presentations in class was announced in advance and students were encouraged to evaluate their friends' performances after each presentation. All activities were counted as part of the course grade.

Evaluation

A questionnaire was distributed to the stu-

dents at the end of the semester. They were asked to express their opinions on the following aspects:

1. To what extent did you like the group activities using the computer?

2. Did these activities help you improve your English?

3. What are the advantages of these activities?

4. How much time did you spend doing each activity?

5. Should these activities be continued?

Their responses are presented in the following tables.

Table 1 shows students' preference in using the computer in learning English. 18.18% reported that they did not like the interview activity at all. 45.45% mentioned that this activity was allright. 27.27% said that they liked this activity while 9.09% said they liked it very much. Concerning songs, one student indicated that he thought this task was O.K. Of the rest, 31.82% mentioned that they liked this activity and 59.09% liked it very much.

When asked about the third activity, "Places", one of them did not like it. Half of them thought it was allright while 31.82% liked this activity and 9.09% liked it very much. As for the "News" activity, one student did not enjoy it; 36.36% thought the activity was O.K.; 40.91% liked it, and 13.64% liked this activity very much. With regards to "People", 18.18% did not like the activity; 36.36% the activity was O.K.; 27.27% liked this activity, and 13.64% liked it very much.

The results reported above help answer the first question: "To what extent do you like the group activities using the computer?" It can be concluded that the students liked "Songs" best (90.91%), "News" second (64.55%), "Places" and "People" third (40.91%) and "Interviews" last (36.36%). However, only 4.55% did not like "Places" and "News". The students appeared to reject "Interviews" since 18.18% indicated that they did not like this activity at all. Similarly, 18.18% did not like the "People" activity. The reason why the students preferred "Songs" the most might be due to the nature of the task. It provides a relaxing atmosphere and makes the class enjoyable. In contrast, they did not like "Interviews" because the task was not authentic and the students already know each other. There-

fore, this activity should be modified. For example, the students might be asked to interview some famous people or students from other classes. The other three tasks are related to the lessons so some students might be bored with them. The

teacher might help them find more interesting content or allow them to do some other activities.

In answer to the second question, "Did these activities help you improve your English?", the students' views are shown in Table 2.

Table 1
Students' Preference in Using Computer in Learning English

Activities	Degrees of Preference					
	1	2	3	4	5	0
1. Interviews	18.18 (N = 4)	-	45.45 (N = 10)	27.27 (N = 6)	9.09 (N = 2)	-
2. Songs	-	-	4.55 (N = 1)	31.82 (N = 7)	59.09 (N = 13)	4.55 (N = 1)
3. Places	-	4.55 (N = 1)	50.00 (N = 11)	31.82 (N = 7)	9.09 (N = 2)	4.55 (N = 1)
4. News	-	4.55 (N = 1)	36.36 (N = 8)	40.91 (N = 9)	13.64 (N = 3)	4.55 (N = 1)
5. People	-	18.18 (N = 4)	36.36 (N = 8)	27.27 (N = 6)	13.64 (N = 3)	4.55 (N = 1)

1 = I don't like the activity at all.

2 = I don't like the activity.

3 = I think the activity is O.K.

4 = I like the activity.

5 = I like the activity very much.

0 = no response

Table 2
English Improvement Based on the CALL Activities

Opinions	%
1. I think CALL activities helped me improve my English.	86.36 (N = 19)
2. My English remains the same.	9.09 (N = 2)
3. My English is worse.	-
4. No response	4.55 (N = 1)

86.36% said that the CALL activities helped them improve their English while 9.09% indicated that their English remained the same. This suggests that most Science students like to use computers to help them learn English outside

their English class. Thus, more communicative CALL activities related to the students' needs and interests should be provided. The advantages of these activities are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Advantages of CALL Activities

Knowledge and Skills	Opinions				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Vocabulary	18.18 (N = 4)	68.18 (N = 15)	13.64 (N = 3)	-	-
2. Grammar	9.09 (N = 2)	40.91 (N = 9)	45.45 (N = 10)	4.55 (N = 1)	-
3. Reading Skills	13.64 (N = 3)	68.18 (N = 15)	18.18 (N = 4)	-	-
4. Knowledge of the World	13.64 (N = 3)	59.09 (N = 13)	27.27 (N = 6)	-	-
5. Word Processor	13.64 (N = 3)	54.55 (N = 12)	31.82 (N = 7)	-	-
6. Co-operation	27.27 (N = 6)	63.64 (N = 14)	9.09 (N = 2)	-	-

5 = I learned the most about this.

4 = I learned a lot about this.

3 = I learned something about this.

2 = I didn't learn anything about this.

1 = I didn't learn anything about this at all.

18.18% said that they learned the most about vocabulary while 68.18% learned a lot about this and 13.64% learned some new vocabulary. 9.09% indicated that they learned the most about grammar whereas 40.91% learned a lot about it and 45.45% learned some grammar from the CALL activities. One student felt that he did not learn anything about grammar from the activities.

Concerning reading skills, 13.64% said that their reading skills had improved the most. 68.18% indicated that their reading skills had improved a lot and 18.18% said their reading skills had moderately improved. Similar

responses were made about their knowledge of the world and how to use a word processor. It is clear that the CALL activities used in this study encouraged the students to work together since 27.27% mentioned that they learned how to cooperate the most and 63.64% co-operated a lot while 9.09% learned something about how to work together.

It can be concluded that the students learned how to co-operate the most from the CALL activities. The second ranked is vocabulary. Reading skills come next, followed by knowledge of the world and how to use a word processor. The students learned the least about grammar from the

computer activities. However, only one student mentioned that he did not learn anything about grammar. Although these results are not the primary objectives of CALL, they imply other benefits of applying technology in learning Eng-

lish. They help some students indirectly acquire English, expand their vocabulary, and learn about the world.

Table 4 presents the students' responses about the time spent on the CALL activities.

Table 4
Time Spent on CALL Activities

Activities	Time			
	less than 1 hr	about 1 hr	more than 1 hr	no response
1. Interviews	50.00 (N = 11)	31.82 (N = 7)	13.64 (N = 3)	4.55 (N = 1)
2. Songs	31.82 (N = 7)	31.82 (N = 7)	31.82 (N = 7)	4.55 (N = 1)
3. Places	36.36 (N = 8)	54.55 (N = 12)	4.55 (N = 1)	4.55 (N = 1)
4. News	40.91 (N = 9)	54.55 (N = 12)	-	4.55 (N = 1)
5. People	40.91 (N = 9)	54.55 (N = 12)	-	4.55 (N = 1)

Most students spent less than one hour for the first task and about one hour for the rest. Only a few spent more than one hour for the first three tasks. The differences might be due to their skill in using the computer or to their reading speed.

One student did not answer this question. He might not have contributed to these activities.

Students' answers to the last question, "Should these CALL activities be continued?", are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Continuation of CALL Activities

Opinions	%
1. I think we shouldn't have CALL activities.	-
2. I think we should have fewer activities. (about 3 activities)	18.18 (N = 4)
3. I think we should have the same number of activities.	77.27 (N = 17)
4. I think we should have more activities. (about 9 activities)	4.55 (N = 1)

None of the students thought that these CALL activities should be discontinued. 18.18% felt that they should have had about three activities. This is probably due to their assignments for other courses. 77.27% indicated that the number of CALL activities was appropriate. One student proposed that there should be more activities, about nine, which corresponds with the number of units in the core materials. These results suggest that the students have developed positive attitudes towards using CALL in learning English. CALL activities might be suitable for facilitating the learning process both cognitively and affectively of Science-oriented students in the Foundation English Course.

Conclusions

The attempt to integrate CALL activities in a general English course in the Thai context yielded positive results in the following respects. Most students enjoyed the interview, song, place, news,

and people activities although they appear to enjoy "Songs" the most and "Interviews" the least. The interview task may not have been authentic enough because all of them already knew each other. The majority believe that the CALL activities helped them to improve their English. The improvement can be seen mainly in vocabulary and reading skills. Half of the students think that their grammar improved due to these CALL activities. Apart from language skills, the students learned how to cooperate and use a word processor. In addition, they gained more knowledge of the world.

Even though this is the first time that active CALL activities have been experimented within the author's class, the time it took to do these activities was similar to that planned. The majority of the students gave positive feedback about the experiment and they think these activities should be continued.

The Author

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Appendix

CALL for Foundation English 1

File 1: Interviews

File 2: Places

File 3: Songs

File 4 : News

File 5: Famous People

INTERVIEWS

Objective : To enable students to communicate using personal information

Skills : Speaking-Listening-Reading-Writing

Level : Mixed

Content : Personal information, friends

Time : 50 minutes

Preparation :

Hardware : one computer per group of 3 students

Software : a standard word-processor

Knowledge : teacher and students--basic word-processing

Procedure :

Pre-computer work:

1. Distribute interview sheets.
2. Get students in each group to ask each other the following personal questions:
 - a. first name
 - b. nickname
 - c. last name
 - d. address: street and number
 - e. telephone number
 - f. date of birth
 - g. place of birth
 - h. height
 - i. weight
 - j. hobbies

Computer-work:

1. Students go to the Resource Center and write a profile of the student they have interviewed. The writing will be done in groups of three. Each group writes three profiles.
2. Students edit, save, and print out the profiles.

Post-computer work:

Each group checks the three profiles for accuracy before handing them in to the teacher.

Evaluation: 10 points

INTERVIEW SHEET

1. What's your first name?

2. What's your nickname?

3. What's your last name? / How do you spell it?

4. Where do you live? / What's your address?

5. Tell me your telephone number. / What's your telephone number?

6. When were you born? / When is your birthday?

7. Where were you born?

8. How tall are you?

9. How much do you weigh?

10. What are your hobbies? / What do you like to do in your free time? / Do you play tennis? / etc.

MY FRIENDS

Instructions : In groups of three, use your interview sheets and write three profiles of the friends
in your group.

Example :

SUDA SUKJAI

The friend I have interviewed is Suda Sukjai. Her nickname is Nid. She lives at 117 Ladprao 112. Her telephone number is 5147987. Nid was born on May 2, 1973 in Bangkok. She is 155 centimeters tall and weighs 47 kilos. Nid likes to play table-tennis. She also loves to swim in her free time.

Now write your three profiles on the computer.

Have you edited your profiles? If not, go back and do it now.
If you have, save your text and print it out.

END OF FILE ONE

PLACES

Objective : To enable students to describe a tourist attraction

Skills : Reading - Writing

Level : Mixed

Content : Traveling, tourist spots

Time : 50 minutes

Preparation :

Hardware : one computer per group of students

Software : a standard word-processor

Knowledge : teacher and students--basic word-processing

Procedure :

Pre-computer work:

1. Prepare some tourist brochures in English and hand them out to students.
2. Ask the students to skim for the following information :
 - a. name of the place
 - b. location
 - c. tourist spots and other attractions such as museums, parks, sports facilities, restaurants, etc.
3. Explain to the students that they are going to write one paragraph about a tourist attraction on the word-processor.

Computer-work:

1. Students in groups of three write up their texts on the word-processor.
2. When students have finished, they should edit their texts to make sure there are no linguistic or factual errors.

Post-computer work :

1. Students exchange their texts with the other groups.
2. Each group grades all the texts using the evaluation form below. The group that receives the most points is the winner.

EVALUATION FORM

	(least)				(most)
	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting					

Correct					

Complete					

Total = _____

Evaluation : 10 points

PLACES

Instructions: In groups of three, write one paragraph about one of the tourist attractions described in your brochures. You should include the following topics in your text :

- a. name of the place
- b. location
- c. tourist spots and other attractions such as museums, parks, sports facilities, restaurants, etc.

Example :

CHIANG RAI

Chiang Rai is located in the northern part of Thailand, close to the Burmese border. It is one of the most interesting, remote and mysterious areas of Asia. Visitors can see small settlements set in jungle valleys where colorfully dressed hill people live in nearly inaccessible tribal villages. They can also visit ancient Burmese-style temples and the well-known Golden Triangle.

Now write a paragraph on the computer about the tourist attraction described in the brochure.

Edit your text and don't forget to save your file.
Print it out before you leave the Resource Center.

 END OF FILE TWO

SONGS

Objective : To enable students to understand English songs

Skills : Listening - Writing

Level : mixed

Content : songs

Time : 50 minutes

Preparation :

Hardware : one computer per group of students

Software : a standard word-processor

Knowledge : teacher and students--basic word-processing

Procedure : **Pre-computer work:**

1. Students listen to some popular songs and choose the two songs which they like best.
2. They write down the words of the two songs.

Computer-work :

1. Students type the two songs with 20 blanks to be filled in.
2. Students edit and save the songs.
3. Students print out the songs.

Post-computer work :

1. Divide students into five teams.
2. Have students listen to each song twice.
3. Have students fill in the blanks. Give three points for the correct answer for the first listening and two points for the correct answer for the second listening.
4. The team which receives the most points is the winner.

Evaluation : 10 points

SONGS

Instructions : In groups of three, type the two songs you have chosen, with blanks to be filled in.

Example :

SING

Sing, sing a song, sing out loud
Sing out _____
Sing of good things not _____
Sing of _____ not sad.
Chorus : Sing, sing a _____ make it simple to last
Your whole _____ long
Don't _____ that it's not good enough
For anyone else to _____ just sing, sing a song
La la la la la la la la la la la
La la la la la la la la la
Sing, sing a song let the _____ sing along
Sing as _____ could be.
Sing for you and for _____.
Just sing, sing a song
Just sing, sing a song.

Now type the two songs on your computer.

Have you left at least 20 words blank? If not, delete other words. If so, don't forget to save the songs and print them out.

END OF FILE THREE

NEWS

Objective : To enable students to write a summary

Skills : Reading-Writing-Listening

Level : Mixed

Content : Local news, foreign news, business, sports

Time : 50 minutes

Preparation :

Hardware : one computer per group of students

Software : a standard word-processor

Knowledge : teacher and students--basic word-processing

Procedure : **Pre-computer work:**

1. Divide students into groups of three. Have them read three stories from newspapers provided in the Resource Center.
2. Have them discuss and choose the most interesting story.
3. Ask them to write a summary of the selected story.
4. Tell them to copy the headline and make up two other headlines.

Computer-work :

1. Have students type the summary of the news story and the three headlines.
2. Tell them to save the text and print it out.

Post-computer work:

1. Have them read their summary of the news item to their friends.
2. Then tell them to read the three headlines before asking their friends to choose the correct one.
3. Give the first student who can get the correct answer a piece of candy.

Evaluation : 10 points

NEWS

Instructions : In groups of three, type the summary of the news story you have chosen and three headlines. You may follow the guidelines given below :

Writing headlines :

- 1. Omit articles e.g. Monkey bites girl
- 2. Use the present simple to refer to past events e.g. Fire breaks out
- 3. Use the infinitive with "to" to express the future e.g. Diana to marry Charles

Writing the summary :

- 1. The present perfect tense often occurs in the summary if the news event itself is more important than the time of the event e.g.
 The President has been shot.
- 2. The past simple tense is often used when details are given e.g.
 It happened when he was about to leave his residence.

Example :

Khaosai Galaxy knocked out Kim Yong-Kang of South Korea on September 29, 1990 at Suphan Buri Stadium. The victim collapsed like a house of cards in the sixth round after the champion hit the challenger with his left hook. Khaosai thus recorded his 15th successive defence of his World Boxing Association junior bantam-weight title.

Headlines

- A. Khaosai Knocks out Kim to Retain Title
- B. World Boxing Association Title
- C. Suphan Buri Stadium Challenger

The correct headline is A.

Now type the summary and the three headlines on your computer.

Have you edited your summary and the headlines? If not, do it now. If so, save the text and print it out.

FAMOUS PEOPLE

Objective : To practice reading for the main idea and supporting details

Skills : Reading-Writing-Listening

Level : Mixed

Content : History, famous people

Time : 50 minutes

Preparation :

Hardware : one computer per group of students

Software : a standard word-processor

Knowledge : teacher and students--basic word-processing

Procedure: Pre-computer work:

1. Divide students into groups of three.
2. Have each group find a biography of a famous person.
3. Divide up the biographies and give each student a part.
4. Have students read their part of the text and write a short summary of the essential biographical information. Help them with language when asked to do so. Encourage students not to copy from the text.

Computer-work :

1. Students type their summaries on the word-processor. Tell them to make sure that their summaries are in chronological order.
2. When students have finished typing their texts, tell them to prepare comprehension questions on the text.

Post-computer work:

1. Divide students into five teams.
2. Have each team read the summary they have written.
3. Have the students ask the other groups questions based on the summary.
4. Give the first team which answers correctly one point for each question. The team that gets the most points is the winner.

Evaluation : 10 points

FAMOUS PEOPLE

 Instructions: In groups of three, type the summary of the biography of the famous person you have read about. Then type out five questions based on the summary.

Example :

MARILYN MONROE

Marilyn Monroe was born on June 1, 1926 in Los Angeles. She was brought up in twelve different foster families. She acted in several films between 1953 and 1955 and was named by Italian critics as "the best foreign actress of 1958." Marilyn had an unhappy married life. She died at her home in L.A. from an overdose of sleeping pills in August 1962.

Questions:

1. Where was Marilyn born?
2. Where did she die?
3. When did she start her career?
4. How did she die?
5. How old was she when she died?

 Now type the summary of the biography of the famous person you have chosen and your five questions on the computer.

 Have you edited your text? If not, do it now. If so, save it and print it out.

 END OF FILE FIVE
