Communicating and Interacting: An Exploration of the Changing Roles of Media in CALL/CMC

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Abstract

The sites of learning and teaching using CALL are shifting from CD-based, LAN-based, or stand-alone programs to the Internet. As this change occurs, pedagogical approaches to using CALL are also shifting to forms which better exploit the communication, collaboration, and negotiation aspects of the Internet. Numerous teachers and designers have created multimedia applications to help learners understand and make meaning from not just the aural and written language of the target culture, but also some of the visual, social, and cultural nuances. Previous studies of the use of visual and multimedia in language learning have shown promising results. However with a major shift to the Internet as the site for learning, we need to re-evaluate what constitutes communication and interactivity in this new context, particularly with the introduction of newer technologies such as webcams as well as more "traditional" media such as video, audio, and still images. This paper discusses the characteristics common to CALL and CMC implementations, some of the distinguishing features of each, and aspects of the teaching and learning contexts in which we find each being used. Conclusions are drawn that 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.

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The role of communication. A decisive role can be played by communication in promoting human development in today's new climate of social change. Communication played a decisive role at every stage of the project - planning, increasing people's participation, training and evaluation. The World Bank, which helped to finance PRODERITH, considered it to be among the most successful programmes they supported, attributing much of its success to its rural communication system.

Communication can focus on the long and sensitive process of changing behaviour and life-styles. Quite recent communication research methodologies make it possible to gain insight into the underlying reasons why people adopt a certain life-style. Mass media and other forms of communication technology have an enormous influence in helping to shape public opinion and underlying sentiment. Newspapers, TV and radio are all important sources of basic information about other people and other places and this can itself help to engender understanding if presented in a fair, even-handed and non-inflammatory way. The media is also an important accountability mechanism: it raises important issues, corruption for example, that might otherwise never be publicly debated or addressed. The media also has an important role in stimulating govern