IMPLEMENTING COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL) FOR VOCABULARY BUILDING THROUGH SPELVIN GAME

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of vocabulary often brings students to the state of boredom. It occurs because they have not changed their learning habits; such as writing words on paper, trying to learn by heart or learning passively through the teacher's explanations and the boring strategies the teachers apply in vocabulary teaching. To help students reduce the disadvantageous condition and find vocabulary lessons more interesting, new strategies is important to consider. One of the strategies is by integrating computer-assisted games (CAG). This is worth trying since it may (1) reduce students' stress, thus brings in relaxation and fun for students; (2) creating more interesting learning atmosphere; (3) involve friendly competition; (4) bring real world context into the classroom

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary holds an important role in foregn language learning. It serves as a catalyst for the four skills; speaking, listening, reading and writing. Wallace (1987: 7) states that learning a foreign language is _basically a matter of learning the vocabulary of the language,' although he also agrees that the system of language, its grammar or structure is also important. In addition, Rivers adds that it is imposible to learn a language without vocabulary-without words. She, further, mentions that language is not a _dry bone' but a living thing, a growing entity, clothed in the _flesh of words (1981: 462)'

In language learning, learners not only need to acquire an adequate amount of words, but should also know how to use them in communication. Perhaps, they know the importance of vocabulary in language learning, but most of them still learn it in a passive way. This condition is caused by the following factors.

First, they think that the teacher's way of teaching vocabulary is boring. In this regard, learners do nothing more than just listening to the teacher explaining the meaning, spelling, and prononcing the words. Second, learners think learning vocabulary is only learning the meanings of the words. As a result, the fuctions of the words come second. Third, mostly learners know and acquire new words only from the textbook used by the teacher. Then, they ask the teacher to explain or give the meaning of the words. Finally, Learners consider that knowing the new words and their meanings is the last resort in

learning vocabulary. They or, perhaps, the teacher do not realize the the purpose of learning vocabulary is not only knowing the meanings, but also using the words accurately for communiction.

Considering the facts above, in foreign language learning learners need to know the importance of vocabulary mastery. To foreign language learners like Indonesians, learning English vocabulary needs special efforts as it is different from their native language. For the English teachers, it is also important to apply a variety of vocabulary teaching strategies, one of which is making use of ICT.

COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL)
About CALL.

The development of information Technology (IT) has permeated the application of computers in the learning process, which is generally known as Computer Assisted Learning (CAL). A computer as a medium is used for the sake of facilitating people in learning, such as learning a language. However a computer is solely a tool and a medium. Hence, it is powerlrss and is totally dependent on the users. In this case, the computer is an intermediary; it is merely a part of the entire learning process. (Hartoyo, 2008: 11).

Computer – Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is an approach to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement and assessment of material to be learned, usually including a substantial interactive element. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) studies the role and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in second/foreign language learning and teaching. It includes a wide range of activities spanning materials and courseware development, pedagogical practice and research.

Typical CALL programs present a stimulus to which the learner must respond. The stimulus may be presented in any combination of text, still images, sound, and motion video. The learner responds by typing at the keyboard, pointing and clicking with the mouse, or speaking into a microphone. The computer offers feedback, indicating whether the learner's response is right or wrong, and in the more sophisticated CALL programs, attempting to analyse the learner's response and to pinpoint errors. Branching to help and remedial activities is a common feature of CALL programs.

There is no question that Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has come of age. Computers have been a feature of teaching and learning of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) since the 1960s in higher education and since the early 1980s in

secondary education. The rapid growth in the use of ICT in MFL in the 1980s led to the foundation of the two leading professional associations: CALICO (USA) in 1982 and EUROCALL (Europe) in 1986, both of which continue to thrive and now form part of the WorldCALL umbrella association.

Early CALL favoured an approach that drew heavily on practices associated with programmed instruction. This was reflected in the term **Computer Assisted Language Instruction** (**CALI**), which originated in the USA and was in common use until the early 1980s, when CALL became the dominant term. Throughout the 1980s CALL widened its scope, embracing the communicative approach and a range of new technologies, especially multimedia and communications technology. An alternative term to CALL emerged in the early 1990s, namely **Technology Enhanced Language Learning**
(**TELL**), which was felt to provide a more accurate description of the activities which fall broadly within the range of CALL. The term TELL has not, however, gained as wide an acceptance as CALL.

For many years, foreign language teachers have used the computer to provide supplemental exercises. In recent years, advances in computer technology have motivated teachers to reassess the computer and consider it a valuable part of daily foreign language learning. Innovative software programs, authoring capabilities, compact disk technology, and elaborate computer networks are providing teachers with new methods of incorporating culture, grammar, and real language use in the classroom while students gain access to audio, visual, and textual information about the language and the culture of its speakers.

Three phases of CALL

Though CALL has developed gradually over the last 30 years, this development can be categorized in terms of three somewhat distinct phases which I will refer to as *behavioristic CALL*, *communicative CALL*, and *integrative CALL*.

Behavioristic CALL

The first phase of CALL, conceived in the 1950s and implemented in the 1960s and '70s, was based on the then-dominant behaviorist theories of learning. Programs of this phase entailed repetitive language drills and can be referred to as "drill and practice" (or, more pejoratively, as "drill and kill"). Drill and practice courseware is based on the model of *computer as tutor*. In other words the computer serves as a vehicle for delivering

instructional materials to the student. The rationale behind drill and practice was not totally spurious, which explains in part the fact that CALL drills are still used today. Briefly put, that rationale is as follows:

- Repeated exposure to the same material is beneficial or even essential to learning
- A computer is ideal for carrying out repeated drills, since the machine does not get bored with presenting the same material and since it can provide immediate nonjudgmental feedback
- A computer can present such material on an individualized basis, allowing students to proceed at their own pace and freeing up class time for other activities

Communicative CALL

The second phase of CALL was based on the communicative approach to teaching which became prominent in the 1970s and 80s. Proponents of this approach felt that the drill and practice programs of the previous decade did not allow enough authentic communication to be of much value. One of the main advocates of this new approach was John Underwood, who in 1984 proposed a series of "Premises for 'Communicative' CALL" (Underwood 1984:52). According to Underwood, communicative CALL:

- focuses more on using forms rather than on the forms themselves;
- teaches grammar implicitly rather than explicitly;
- allows and encourages students to generate original utterances rather than just manipulate prefabricated language;
- does not judge and evaluate everything the students nor reward them with congratulatory messages, lights, or bells;
- avoids telling students they are wrong and is flexible to a variety of student responses;
- uses the target language exclusively and creates an environment in which using the target language feels natural, both on and off the screen; and
  will never try to do anything that a book can do just as well.

Integrative CALL

Integrative approaches to CALL are based on two important technological developments of the last decade - multimedia computers and the Internet. Multimedia technology - exemplified today by the CD-ROM - allows a variety of media (text, graphics,

sound, animation, and video) to be accessed on a single machine. What makes multimedia even more powerful is that it also entails *hypermedia*. That means that the multimedia resources are all linked together and that learners can navigate their own path simply by pointing and clicking a mouse (Warschauer, 1996).

THE PLACE OF VOCABULARY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Some linguists state their arguments about the importance of vocabulary in a language teaching. Wilkins in Thornburry (2001: 1) argues that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. In addition, Taylor (1990) points out that vocabulary is central in language teaching. This implies that an explicit teaching and learning of vocabulary is essential especially when learning a new language is occuring and learners have to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary. Further, Wallace (1989) adds that communication is made possible only through the vocabulary one acquires. It is, therefore, obvious that the development of vocabulary skills must be carried out as a crucial part in learning a new language. Thus, it should be noted that learners who are rich in vocabulary are expected to be able to express themselves feely and confidently.

USING GAMES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY

Games is any contest among adversaries (players) operating under constraints (rules) for an objective of winning (Greddler, 1990: 2). Games provide quite extensive language practice opportunities for both general and specific language skills and so they will be considered as integral part of teaching and learning process (Carrier, 1980: 42). Apart from being powerful educational tools, games can also be used for specific purposes like icebreakers, social activites, even therapy.

Huang (1996: 1) comes to a conclusion that "learning through games could encourage the operation of certain psychological and intellectual factors which could facilitate communication heightened self-esteem, motivation and spontaneity, reinforcing learning, improving intonation and building confidence."

Lee (1995:35) lists several main advantages when games are used in the classroom, including "a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class", "motivating and challenging" "effort of learning", and "language practice in the various skills.

In addition, in vocabulary teaching, games help learners to learn and retain new words more easily. Vocabulay games enable learners to use English in a meaningful communicative context. It is understandable when one considers that games act as a

powerful force to motivate and draw out quiet and unsure learners. Thus, teachers of ESL?EFL should be aware of the vast potentials that games can provide and involve learners in active learning of English, in this regard-vocabulary.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GAMES

Uberman in Siek-Piskozub (1994: 37-38) states that there are many factors to consider while discussing games, one of which is appropriacy. Teachers should be very careful about choosing the right games for their learners if if they want to make them profitable for the learning process. If games are to bring desired outcomes, they must correspond to either learners' level, age, or the materials. Not all games are appropriate for all learners. Different groups of learners require different topics, materials, and modes of games. For example, beginners benefit most from games which require physical involvement, immitations of models, and competitions between groups (players). Another factor influencing the choice of games is its length and time needed to accomplish. Many games have a time limit, but, actually teachers can improvise in terms of level of difficulty, time alloted, and game management during the teaching and learning process. (1994: 43)

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPELVIN GAME IN CLASSROOM

About the Game

As stated above, there are several considerations to make before choosing the game for the instruction i.e. learners' level, age, or the materials. The Spelvin game is versatile; it can be applied to any level of learners as well as in any stage of the instruction. Also, it is widely open for necessary improvisation theachers need to make to adjust the desired activities.

The Spelvin game is created by Skunk Studios Inc. in 2003. The main goal of this game is, generally, similar to the Scrable game which is commonly played by English learners, that player(s) must spell or arrange words from 7 random letters. Some letters have more value (50, 100, 150, 200, or 400 point) than the other letters. This game begins when player(s) spins the block of 7 random letters from which he/she must compose words, if possible, the big words (words having big score). Player(s) may score 10,000 extra points for spelling or arranging 8 consecutive words in a single spin/round. All together, there 14 rounds in this game which can played both online or offline.

The Activity (One-Round Competition)

Teachers may make some improvisations before implement it to the students. In implementing this game, teachers may follow the hints below:

- This game may be played individually, in pairs, or in groups.
- Teachers need to prepare a computer, projector, and the game software.
- As the time is limitted, it is suggested that this game is played in form of groups competition. So, the next step to take is to grouped learners (3-4).
- Then, teachers explain how the game will be played. (Teachers must be sure that all understand the rules):
    - Each group create as many words as possible from the 7 scrambled letters in one round.
    - In case the group can no longer create words from the existing letters, the group can respin to get the new block of letters.
    - To score, each group must click the ―BANK‖ button.
    - The green colored ―BANK‖ button indicates that the word is available. ☐ The yellow colored ―BANK‖ button indicates the the word is already formed in the same round.
    - In one round (1st round) each group must arrange or create eleven words and more words in levels or round to come.
- As learners understand, each group has the change to play the game in a single round only.
- The group scores the highest in a single round, disregarding they know the meaning of the words or not, becomes the winner.

Alternative Activity

As the Spelvin game is actually not time-limitted, it is feared that learners will take time longer than the time alloted for the class. To cope with this problem, teachers can improvise by giving a time limit for each group in a single round. Also, to make it more meaningful, each group can be instructed to mention some aspects about the words they form i,e, meaning and part of speech. Another round/level may be played in case there is spare time.

CONCLUSION

In teaching English, teachers must be aware of the importance of vocabulary as it glues the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Unfortunately, the teaching of vocabulary often falls only on teachers presenting new words and giving the meaning for granted. If this activity continues, learners may undergo boredom. So, presenting vocabulary in a different way appealing to learners is an important step to

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