

Integration of CMC in EOP Class for Higher Occupational Colleges in China

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Abstract: With the increasing need of engaging computer-assisted language learning (CALL) into language teaching and learning, the use of computer mediated communication (CMC) almost has proliferated because of its interactive and social nature ^[11]. In light of current language teaching context, this paper mainly focuses on how to integrate CMC tools in EOP class and gives the detailed implementation plan, aiming to cater for target students' diverse and authentic communicative purpose.

Keywords: Computer mediated communication; EOP teaching

1. Higher Occupational College: Attitudes and Curriculum

In response to government policies, higher occupational college, which plays an important role in higher education, actively engaging technology into school curriculum development to provide blended teaching and learning, facilitating teachers and students to get access to extensive online resources and applications. Such active attitude and passion could be seen from Zhejiang Province Higher occupational education Research Project List (2020), in the module of language teaching, the majority of colleges covered topics of integrating technology and informationalism for teaching enhancement. For example, Higher occupational English teaching for tourism research based on 'web 2.0' conducted by the college where the author works.

Concerned with curriculum development and materials building, in order to cultivate highly skilled personnel and enhance students' competence in communicative English in the workplace, experiencing the transition stage from EGP to EOP teaching would be the continuous state in the near future ^[8]. In this project, the curriculum system of EOP teaching for International Business students is still under modification. Simultaneously, multimedia classroom for facilitating English speaking and writing practice with CMC tools and other CALL technologies has been constantly introduced to this college.

2. Target Students' Capability and Needs

In this project, target students are freshmen majored in International Business with an average B2 level for English language proficiency, which is the first echelon among higher occupational college students. Student at this point just finished college entrance examination and graduated from the examination-oriented education system, which addresses the English input skills but much less on output skills. Students solely have a few opportunities to practice communicative English speaking and writing. In addition, according to the questionnaire self-completed by target students, it indicates that 95% students 'strongly agree' and 'agree' that English has an important influence on their future income level, job promotion and career development. Furthermore, through the in-depth out-of-class communication with several students, the necessity of combination of occupational skills and English learning has been highlighted, especially for verbal communicative purpose. For example, attending job interview, English communication via social media and audio/video conferencing. In this way, EOP teaching should insist student-centred and students needs analysis principle, adopting professional development (e.g. trade company) related authentic materials, while integrating CMC tools to carry on vocational thematic and contextual teaching.

2.1 The Implementation Plan of CMC in EOP Class

Technology itself could not contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning, but that how the teachers engaging technology with insights and understanding of language and teaching context to design and implement suitable activities ^[7].

3. Rationales and Objectives

Given the target language teaching context, the implementation plan aims to integrate both CMC 1.0 and CMC 2.0 tools into EOP

class, which could enhance target students' communication skills, especially English speaking. Specifically, Email and Skype discussion group which are regarded as asynchronous text-based and video tools, Skype chat box and Zoom conference call as a synchronous text-based and video tool will be addressed. Email is the most classic CMC but stills playing an indispensable part in workplace information exchange. Through editing and sending text-based information via email, business email writing skills include commonly used formats, terms and greetings could be practiced, vocabulary and grammar could be reviewed and examined as well, further developing students' communication skills under this specific situation. Simultaneously, getting familiar with the functions of email in English version (e.g. suspected spam, subscribe settings) is also the key point. In addition, Skype has been attached great importance in this project because of its free charge, stable quality and easy access as long as there is a high-speed internet connection in mainland China^[5]. Firstly, Skype discussion group is formed for the whole class as discussion boards to provide a platform for joint discussion over self-made videos, which is easily accessible and handling without vpn limitation to upload and share videos. The self-made video allows students to use spoken English to record several times until they are satisfied. Secondly, text-based chat, for its synchronous and informal nature, has been suggested by teachers as well as researchers^[9] to improve speaking skills indirectly without requiring students to physically "speak". Thirdly, making conference call allows real time interactions among group members for more engaging oral skills practice. To conclude, the two primary reasons why the special interest put on these CMC tools among other CALL technologies of this project are as followings:

3.1 To Cater for Target Students' Needs on Diverse Communicative Purpose

Simple face to face communication (e.g. Q&A between teacher and students, pair work, group discussion) in the traditional classroom setting could not meet the students' needs on diverse communicative purpose and future professional demanding, while engaging CMC tools benefits students through the enrichment of the medium for communication and less restriction of time and space. Furthermore, speaking practice could be done pre-class, in class and post-class with more options. In this way, learner autonomy also could be stimulated to some extent.

3.2 Get Familiar with the Authentic Communication Tools in the Future Careers

The CMC tools applied in this project are all authentic tools, like Skype and email, which are frequently used for contacting colleagues and customers in the international trade company or other international business related company. By introducing these tools and applications into EOP classroom, students could get familiar with these authentic CMC tools in advance to have a better preparation for professional life.

The transition from 'Pen Assisted Language Learning' to the integration of CMC in the EOP classroom makes it possible for students to approach authentic communicative language use which is 'so often missing in the micro-world of the classroom'^[3]. In this way, English learning becomes more dimensional and figurative with re-enactment of authentic professional scenarios. While implementing these activities, the contextual and thematic teaching and learning is preferred with the setting of task-based. Two in-class internet-based group work sample activities are designed for cooperative learning with two principles of communication and knowledge sharing^[4]. One post-class self-completed activity is created for independent learning with joint discussion for further peer interactions.

4. Sample Activity: Start a Conference Call (15mins)

This activity is demanding for students at this level to some extent, which could be done right after activity one or at the end of unit learning depending on students' previous performance. The meeting subject is making a production plan for next quarter with its duration of 10 minutes. Students remain in the same group with the same roles and start the conference call via zoom. Extra training for 5 minutes will be needed on how to use zoom including setting up virtual conference room, using chat box, changing background and recording. Students are required to make a group video conference call with mic and camera on. In addition, recordings are needed for further teacher assessment and demonstration.

5. Performance-based Assessment Methods

This project adopts a hybrid assessment approach with a mixture of self assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment. Firstly, self assessment will be carried out during the whole process for self correction and reflection. Secondly, peer assessment is also highlighted with its embedment in sample activities. For example, exemplar demonstration of video recordings chosen by teacher to the whole class in activity 2 and video commenting in the skype group in activity 3. Finally, through observation and assessment of recordings, teacher could have a relatively thorough grasp of students' progress and levels. In particular, khoot as formative assessment which is a game-based real-time quiz competition website will be introduced to the class, which could encourage students' participation in

the class for its engaging features.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, in light of the current teaching context, this paper demonstrates several feasible activities designed for higher occupational college students majored in international business within technology integration, which mainly addressing the engagement of CMC for English speaking enhancement. Some strengths and weaknesses are also discussed in light of this project and broader teaching context.

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