

Chapter 7.8

Culture-Based Language Learning Objects: A CALL Approach for a Ubiquitous World

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents culture-based language-learning objects (CLLOs) in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), supported by user-centered interaction design. CLLOs' design has been drawn on (a) social constructivist pedagogical theories, (b) self-organised strategies in social contexts, and (c) Scandura's structural analysis and Gange's instructional events. This chapter discusses culture-based language-learning principles and the rationale on which the construction and use of CLLOs are founded on. It also

makes suggestions about the ways CLLOs can be constructed by second/foreign language (L2) teachers. A CLLO example was designed and presented for the context of the Greek Diaspora in the United Kingdom (UK). Furthermore, this chapter introduces the combination of norm-based and culture-based language learning in CALL, the grey zone as the distance between second and foreign language learning, the open nature in Learning Objects with the use of forums or chats. Lastly, it suggests CLLOs networks use in the age of ubiquitous computing.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, the possibilities for computer-enhanced language learning have been on the forefront of educational studies. There are two reasons for the increased interest in CALL: the fast-paced technological changes in recent years, and the new methods of teaching/learning languages, one of which is culture-based learning. Ubiquitous computing sees computers not as simple technological tools that facilitate everyday transactions, but as an integral part of contemporary life. One of the main principles of ubiquitous computing is that computers will not be more mobile than they are already, although the information will (Ziveldis, 2004). Hence, interoperability for systems accessibility could suggest new inventions for problems that already exist; for instance, communication among L2 learners. Self-directed learning in L2 environments lifts the barriers of time and space and facilitates the language teacher. Therefore, blended learning, which combines both online and off-line learning modes, can be an approach within the ubiquitous computing framework. Our proposal within the ubiquitous computing and CALL frameworks aim at (a) improving L2 learning, (b) enhancing communication, (c) supporting new forms of creativity and expression, and (d) providing an enjoyable and exciting L2 learning mode.

Taking into consideration that learning always occurs in social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978), the potential of CALL and the advantages of culture-based L2 learning as well as our experience in the Greek Language Classes (GLCs) in the UK, we decided to conduct a questionnaire survey to investigate learners' interests and needs. The questionnaire's findings helped us identify the objectives of CLLOs and, consequently, design an example of a learning object. The objectives of the proposed CLLO regarding scalable ubiquitous computing distributed systems are: (a) to enhance individualistic learning in the particular social context of GLCs; (b) provide access of

language learning independent of time and space, and (c) support the design for networks that can expand and handle a growing number of devices, integrated into everyday life. Thereafter, in the proposed design, one part emphasises the theory and other examines engineering.

L2 LEARNING AND CALL

Social constructivist theorists such as Bruner (1966) and Vygotsky (1978) view learning as a process in which students are actively involved and learn through interaction with their peers, assisted by teachers. However, the discovery of knowledge as such springs from their intrinsic motivation and personal past- and present-life experiences.

Kern and Warschauer (2000) claim that the foundations of the social constructivist language pedagogy in CALL and L2 learning have created teaching principles according to which the target language is acquired through both interaction among the learners via computer (the socio-cognitive perspective in CALL) and interaction between the learner and the computer (the cognitive perspective in CALL). Since learners view the computer as a tool of learning and a means of communication, the intrinsic motivational aspect of the computer is seen as an important quality of CALL. Furthermore, research has shown that the socio-cognitive applications of CALL offer learners opportunities to use the target language in meaningful situations. It has also been observed that in these applications, there is an increased language input and output as well as learners' active participation and self-expression (Vlachos, Athanasiadis, & Ganetsos, 2004). Finally, the social constructivist perspective in CALL has created principles, according to which:

- Learners may exhibit *behavioral changes* after being involved in CALL learning processes.

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