

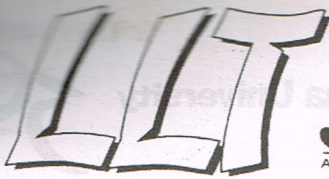
# LLT

## JOURNAL

A Journal on Language and Language Teaching

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## Notes on articles contribution:

LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE TEACHING JOURNAL (LLT Journal), to appear twice a year (in February and August) for teachers and students, is published by the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education, Sanata Dharma University. This journal welcomes articles on language and language teaching. Articles should be original and typed, double-spaced, about 12 – 15 pages of quarto-sized (A4), and written in English. A copy of the article as well as the file (saved in a diskette in MsWord Document Format) should be submitted together with the Abstract, Keywords, and a brief biography of the writer.

## THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION MEDIA IN SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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### **Abstract**

*The information and communication technology has been extensively utilized for the purpose of second or foreign language learning or acquisition. Among all beneficiaries that it can provide, there are at least two advantages that the information and communication media can provide. First, it can facilitate natural speech and provide language context that become the important factors to improve comprehension. Second, it can also provide language input, process, socio-affective filter that enhance*

**Keywords:** *Information and communication media, language learning/acquisition, comprehension, natural speech, context, input, process, socio-affective filter.*

### **1. Introduction**

Information and communication media have been rapidly developed, and now, are still accelerating in amazing ways. They enable people to communicate not only in one direction, but also in two directions (two-way-communication). They are also capable of eliminating the dimension of, not only space, but also time. One can communicate with somebody else who stays thousand miles away at the same time. The advanced developments of information and communication media with their audio-visual and multimedia equipment enable to generate communication with all its aspects and

contexts. In other words, true communication happens through the media.

This development gives also a huge impact to second (and also foreign) language learning and acquisition. Second (or foreign) language is mastered through either a conscious processes (learning) or unconscious processes (acquisition).<sup>1</sup> Both processes may happen through, or can utilize the information and communication media.

This paper elaborates some beneficiaries of the information and communication technology when it is utilized for second or foreign language learning.

## **2. Utilizing Information and Communication Media in Language Learning and Acquisition**

On one hand, the process of acquisition takes place, when people use the media to get a message or to communicate with other people using the target language. What happens here is the strong version of communicative approach in second language learning – using the target language, and as a consequence, the language proficiency increases unconsciously. On the other hand, when people use a set of software and utilize the media for the purpose of learning the target language, the process of learning takes place.<sup>2</sup> It is developed from the weak version of communicative approach – learning the language with the main purpose in order to be able to use the language as a means of communication.<sup>3</sup> For instance, people have extensively engineered the computer and multimedia software and hardware as one of language learning media called Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) with its considerable benefits that can be taken form it. Utilizing this method, a learner can improve

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, Wolfgang. 1986. *Second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press. Page 15-16. Brown, H. Douglas. 2000. *Principles of language learning and teaching*. San Francisco State University. Page 277-278.

<sup>2</sup> c.f. Brumfit, C.J.. 1983. *Video applications in English language teaching*. British Council in association with Pergamon Press. Page 1-10.

<sup>3</sup> Richard, Jack C. and Rodgers, Theodore S.. 1986. *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

not only the receptive skills, but also the production of the target language.<sup>4</sup>

As it has been aforementioned in the previous discussion, the advanced information and communication media are able to provide communication with all its aspects (orthography, prosody, phonology, morphology, and syntax) and contexts (sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, socio-politics<sup>5</sup>, and culture). It happens because of the extensive development of advanced printed linguistic information (automated linguistic data) and audio-visual technology they can provide. The availability of automated linguistic data or corpus linguistics, for instance, enables people to take the benefit from it, not only for language researches but also for the purpose of language learning. They are used either to learn a particular language element or to improve a certain language skill.<sup>6</sup> One of them is to improve the speech production, since information and communication media can provide technological capacity to process human speech and to respond to it.

### 3. Natural Speech, Context, Comprehension, and Acquisition

Information and communication media give the user, who is notably the second language learner, wide opportunities to confront with a variety of natural speeches. They give the learners the linguistic environment (context) that is so crucial for the learning process itself.<sup>7</sup> Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language, i.e., natural communication where the speakers are concerned with the message they are conveying and listening to.<sup>8</sup> Every meaning in

<sup>4</sup> c.f. Brumfit, C.J.. 1983., Page 6-10.

<sup>5</sup> c.f. Brouwn, Douglas. 2001. *Teaching by principles. An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. San Francisco State University. Page 115.

<sup>6</sup> McEnery, Tony and Wilson, Andrew. 1996. *Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Quinn, T.J.. *The comprehension of natural speech in second language learning* in Richards, Jack C. (Ed.). 1980. *Applications of linguistics to language teaching*. Singapore University Press. Page 87-88.

<sup>8</sup> Quinn T.J. Loc. Cit.

communication is bound to its context, otherwise the information or message is not conveyed successfully.

From practical point of view, the ability to comprehend natural speech is the most important skill a second language learner has to acquire. In addition, from the point of view of one interested in theory, an examination of attitudes towards natural speech is the most enlightening way of highlighting the essential basis of any theory of language acquisition.<sup>9</sup>

Comprehension is the initial step for someone who is involved successfully in communication. The comprehension of the natural speech is preliminary to language production. It is very important because effective learning or effective use of a second language involves, in a natural speech, a phenomenon that is called multi-dialectal receptive competence. That is to say, effective interaction in a second language requires the ability to understand many varieties of speech that differ markedly, at many levels, from the speech of any one individual learner or speaker.<sup>10</sup> The information and communication media provide this facilitation that either second and foreign language learners can take an advantage from it.

CALL's speech recognition programs, for instance, have a multitude of potential applications: exercises in pronunciation, feedback graphs showing accuracy of a learner's control of phonemic and prosodic elements, etc.<sup>11</sup> From the point of view of psycholinguistics, this improves the skill that precedes comprehension – a mental process by which listeners take in the sounds uttered by a speaker and use them to construct, and give interpretation of what they think the speaker intended to convey. It is the building of meanings from sounds.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., page 82.

<sup>10</sup> Loc.Cit.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, Douglas 2001., Op.Cit., page 146-146.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, Herbert H. and Clark, Eve V..1977. *Psychology and language*.  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. Page 43.

#### 4. Input, Process, Socio-Affective filter, and Language Production

Second language acquisition comprises three major elements: input, process, and product.<sup>13</sup> Comprehensible input is very important in second and foreign language learning. Taking an advantage from information and communication media, a learner are able to search for a variety of input that s/he needs, or that fit her/his level of language proficiency. In automated linguistic data (corpus linguistics) and machine-readable texts<sup>14</sup> (c.f. internet web-sites), there are many types of language data, language registers, thematic and stylistic texts that are available for communication in general, and language learning in specific. Moreover, global communication using the information and communication media, which is now very easy for everybody to engage in, has become the 'heaven' for people who are 'hungry' for information and who want to converse using any foreign language with its native speakers.

Linguistic environment that happens in the natural speech provides the learners with the socio-affective filter.<sup>15</sup> Taking an advantage from the information and communication media, the learner can minimize her/his socio-affective filter, and, as a consequence, optimize her/his acquisition process, especially the speech production. Low socio-affective filter is a very crucial factor for the process of second language acquisition, in which the learner can effectively utilize the intake or input, so that maximum outcome can be gained successfully.

Improving the language production is usually difficult for 'reluctant speakers', especially in general classroom language activities. There are at least three possible causes of reluctant speakers: cultural, linguistic, and psychological factors.<sup>16</sup> Concerning the psychological

<sup>13</sup> Douglas Brown 2001., Op.Cit., page 88.

<sup>14</sup> McEnery, Tony and Wilson, Andrew. 1996. Op. Cit., page 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page 83

<sup>16</sup> Nunan, David. 1999. *Second language teaching and learning*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers. Page 131.

factor, many language learners have the feeling of inferiority when they are sitting in a language classroom among other learners, or in a real communication among other speakers of the target language. Many of them do not have enough confidence and courage to express themselves using the target language. As a result, low language production usually occurs to those who do not have courage to speak. Using the information and communication media, a learner communicates with and produces the language more freely and in unconscious ways, as if s/he was not learning the target language. It is the power of information and communication media to 'eliminate' the dimensions of time and space. S/he is staying alone at her/his place, but s/he is engaging in a real communication with other people at the same time. In this process, language acquisition occurs simultaneously.

In CALL, and moreover, in the real use of information and communication media, learner-centered learning takes place fully. Learner-centered learning is very important since this process focuses on the learner's needs, styles, and goals, allows the learner's creativity and innovation, and enhances the sense of competence and self-worth. In learner-centered learning, learners are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own style of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning. In addition, this process does not abandon the cooperative, collaborative, and interactive learning principles that also become the communication principles in general.<sup>17</sup> Information and communication media can give a lot of contributions to these positive aspects of learning.

In the oral productive skill, speaking, a learner must have an opportunity to speak as much as possible. CALL programs, especially which is intended for individual learner, for example, can be designed particularly to satisfy this need. This does not often happen in common classroom activities in which a number of learners often dominate the conversation. Participation in the whole communication is also crucial. Real communication using information and communication

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<sup>17</sup> c.f. Brown, Douglas 2001., Op.Cit., page 43, 46-48., and Clark, Herbert H. and Clark, Eve V..1977., Op. Cit., page 122..



media gives the widest opportunity among the other media to the learner, who also becomes the actor in the communication. Communication will automatically no longer exist if the learner does not actively take part in it. When playing as the actor in the communication, the learner becomes the data processing machine of the linguistic input s/he unconsciously get in the communication process.<sup>18</sup>

Another advantage is that learners' motivation is generally high because they are always interested in the topic they have chosen themselves. When the conversation takes place, the language they are using is of an acceptable level since they express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other, and of an acceptable level of language accuracy.<sup>19</sup>

In writing, one learns to write either as a means or as an end. It is, however, also possible to do it as both a means and ends. As a means, writing is widely used within foreign language courses as a convenient means for engaging with aspects of language other than writing itself. For example, learners note down new vocabulary; copy out grammar rules; write out answers to reading or listening comprehension questions; do written tests, etc. In these examples, writing is simply used as a means of getting the students to attend to and practice a particular language point. In writing as an end, on the other hand, other activities take as their main objective. At the 'micro' level they practice specific written forms as the level of word or sentence (handwriting or typing, spelling, punctuation), and at the 'macro' level the emphasis is on content and organization: tasks invite learners to express themselves using their own words, state a purpose for writing, etc. The examples of this type are writing stories, argumentation, exposition, etc. The third combines purposes of both types of writing.<sup>20</sup> Information and communication media give

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<sup>18</sup> Corder, S. Pit. 1973. *Introducing applied linguistics*. A Division of Penguin Book in association with Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd.

<sup>19</sup> c.f. Ur, Penny. 1996. *A course in language teaching. Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press. Page 120.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., page162.

facilitation for gaining these types of writing. Corpus linguistics, for example, provides greater chances for writing as a means, while real communication using the media for the second.<sup>21</sup>

### 5. Concluding Remarks

The information and communication technology is able to facilitate communication with all its aspects (orthography, prosody, phonology, morphology, and syntax) and contexts (sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, socio-politics, and culture) that are necessary of second and foreign language acquisition.

The information and communication media can provide the second or foreign language learners with natural speech and language context. The ability to comprehend natural speech is the most important skill a second language learner has to acquire. Whereas, language context contributes to comprehension that becomes one of the primary factors of second or foreign language acquisition.

The information and communication media can also provide input, process, and socio-affective filters that enhance the language production. Utilizing information and communication technology, a second and foreign language learner is able to search for a variety of input that she or he needs, or that fit her/his level of language proficiency. Taking an advantage from the information and communication media, the learner can minimize her/his socio-affective filter, and, as a consequence, optimize her/his acquisition process, especially the speech production.

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<sup>21</sup> c.f. McEnery, Tony and Wilson, Andrew. 1996. Op. Cit., page 29-68,103-129.

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