

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning

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Abstract

Is CALL (computer Assisted Language Learning) a new Phenomena? Infact, it can trace history back to Skinner, who advocated the use of teaching machines. The early pioneers of CALL used mainframe computers (personal computers did not exist at this time) and tended to be working in large scale funded projects in US universities, such as PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations) and TICCIT (Time- shared, Interactive, and Computer Controlled Information Television). What is interesting about these projects is how they trailed techniques that have become part of general practice today, in this case, the use of authoring systems to produce mainly behavioral materials. This was, after all, the period of audio lingualism. The systems were designed by computing specialists, but the materials were created by teachers following basic models that constrained what they could do.(TICCIT was more constraining than PLATO).

Undoubtedly more and more educators are increasingly becoming aware of the innumerable and indomitable learning management systems that have come to invade our education industry. This awareness has clearly necessitated the whole educators to fall into two categories: the educators who shy away from using ICT, in other words the various learning management tools and the educator who show their prowess by adeptly using various tools. Presumably, the shy ones will be replaced by the ones who are bravely venturing to use ICT. In spite of some resistance from some corners, the use of computers and the various learning management tools have become powerful and indispensable tools in the world of learning. As a result, we witness witnesses a wide range of collaborative learning strategies enabled by the use of computers and internet. This computer supported collaborative work cuts across research in psychology, computer science and education.

This paper attempts to throw light on how CSCL (Computer-supported collaborative Learning) can be a powerful method that can largely benefit users of distance or co-locative learning via networked computers, such as the courses offered via the internet or in a digital classroom. Also, this paper will try to explain how CSCL is an indomitable tool to support students in learning together effectively and share the communication of ideas and information among others. The paper will focus on the various perspectives, primarily on instructors and that of the student. The instructor's perspective in designing and administering the web based tools and the student's perspectives as gleaned in feedback with respect to their motivation, extent of participation, role in using web based tools, learning experiences and overall satisfaction.