

# TEACHING LARGE CLASSES WITH WEB TECHNOLOGIES

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This article explores teachers' benefits of using CALL (Computer-assisted Language Learning) which includes teaching the English Language in large classes. This paper reports on the perceived differences between the classical way of teaching the language and the modern one i.e. using the information technologies. Research shows that by using computers, students become better problem solvers and better communicators. Over a network, using e-mail and sharing files, students have the chance to collaborate and work together with other classmates, peers, and teachers. Learning is then transformed from a traditional passive-listening exercise to an experience of discovery, exploration, and excitement. Students can begin to realize their full potential when they are empowered to contribute and collaborate as a team to accomplish their reading and writing tasks more effectively.

Until quite recently, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) was a topic of relevance mostly to those with a special interest in that area. Recently, though, computers have become so widespread in schools and homes and their uses have expanded so dramatically that the majority of language teachers must now begin to think about the implications of computers for language learning. This article provides brief overview of how computers can be used for language teaching (Goyal, 2002). It focuses not on a technical description of hardware and software, but rather on the pedagogical questions that teachers have considered in using computers in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Language learning approaches, information technologies, large classes

## 1. Introduction

Large classes are a reality in many countries and they pose particular challenges. This article suggests ways to help discipline, to use group work and to cope with limited resources. Keeping students interested and engaged in the current topic or activity is a daily challenge for teachers in the classroom. One of the advantages of the Internet is that it provides new possibilities for assisting teachers to successfully meet this challenge. Computers have been used for language teaching ever since the 1960's (Malhotra, 2004).

## 2. Challenges of teaching a large class

There are a lot of challenges faced by a teacher instructing large classes:

- It's difficult to keep good discipline going in a large class.
- You have to provide for more children of different ages and different abilities, who want to learn different things at different speeds and in different ways.
- You don't have enough time for each individual one.
- You can't easily give each child the individual attention they need.
- You may not have enough books or teaching and learning aids.
- It's difficult to get students understand and interested.
- Less attention so less progress

Until quite recently, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) was a topic of relevance mostly to those with a special interest in that area (Brown, 1999). Recently, though, computers have become so widespread in schools and homes and their uses have expanded so dramatically that the majority of language teachers must now begin to think about the implications of computers for language learning. The best way to meet the above-mentioned needs is to use Computer-assisted Language Learning because there are a lot of advantages of it.

## 3. Advantages of CALL (Computer-assisted Language Learning)

- Motivation
- Authentic materials for study
- Greater interaction
- Different sources of information
- Global understanding
- Individualization
- Repeated exposure to the same material
- Repeated drills and immediate non-judgmental feedback

- Material on an individualized basis
- Flexible to a variety of student responses
- Powerful self-access facility
- A new role to teaching materials

There are a lot of advantages of CALL but it is not applied everywhere successfully because there are several barriers that do not let it be applied in the educational programmes. The barriers inhibiting the practice of Computer-assisted Language Learning can be classified in the following common categories:

- Financial barriers
- Availability of computer hardware and software at the institutions
- Lack of technical and theoretical knowledge of teaching staff and students
- Acceptance of the technology
- Lack of knowledge of its benefits
- Lack of interests
- Lack of time and awareness

#### 4. Computer-assisted Language Learning in a large class

It is quite obvious that a large class can be divided into several groups based on students' knowledge. In order to organize different groups based on students' knowledge of the English Language it is necessary to define their level. For this reason I have created a web-site [WWW.geocities.com/kumarlatvia/test.html](http://WWW.geocities.com/kumarlatvia/test.html) In this site there is a test which define students' knowledge of the English language. There are 63 questions in the test and as soon as students complete the test they get to know about their levels.

- Beginners
- Elementary
- Pre-Intermediate
- Intermediate
- High-Intermediate
- Advanced

In a large class students' pairs and groups can help each other and learn from each other. They don't get bored listening to teacher talk.

#### 5. Group organization to suit the students' abilities

**Approaches of Language Learning and Teaching:** There are 3 well-known approaches to teach and learn languages:

1. Classical approach (Teacher + Students)
2. Modern approach (Computer + Students)
3. Ultramodern approach (Teacher + computer + Student)

The research carried out at Information Systems Management Institute has proved that the best way of learning any language is approach 3 as having been explained the topic by a teacher and a computer in class, students learned better and faster and they scored better marks in the tests.

##### Group division within approach 3:

A teacher divides class into several groups depending on the score that shows their level of the English language knowledge. There can be more than one group of students with the same level. The test consists of 63 questions. A teacher divides class into several groups taking into consideration that in one group there cannot be more than 5 students.

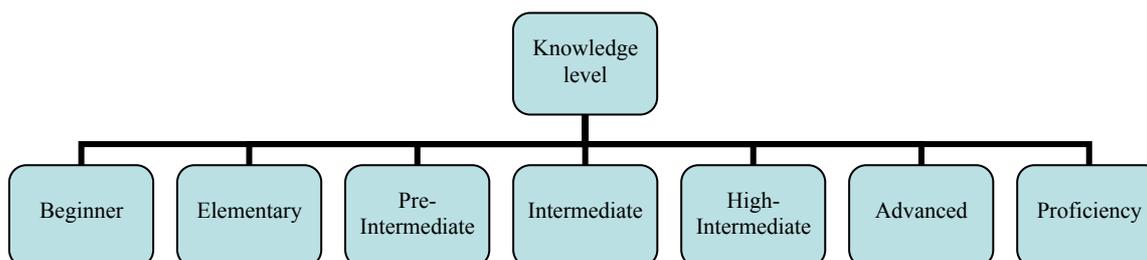


Fig.1. Knowledge-based group division

As soon as a teacher defines students' knowledge level, a class can be divided into different groups depending on their knowledge level taking into consideration that a group can have not more than 4 students.

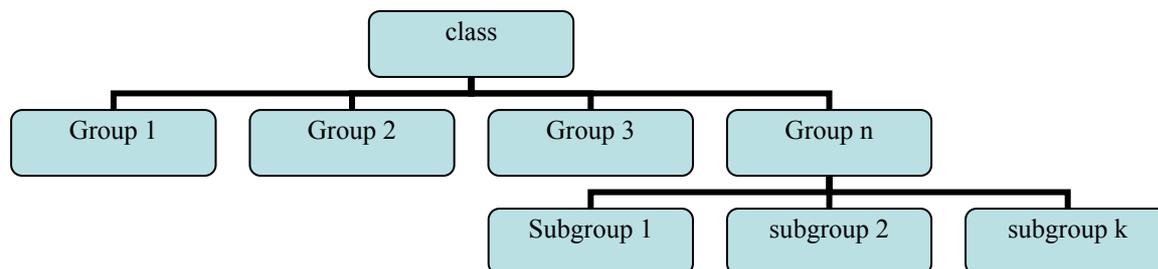


Fig.2. Division of a large class into various groups

As a result of the above-mentioned test, we can define mathematical expectation of variables which gives average expected answers of a test.

$$M(x) = X_1P_1 + X_2P_2 + \dots + X_nP_n = \sum_{i=1}^n X_iP_i.$$

As  $P_1 + P_2 + \dots + P_n = 1$ , then

$$M(x) = \frac{X_1P_1 + X_2P_2 + \dots + X_nP_n}{P_1 + P_2 + \dots + P_n} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n X_iP_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n P_i}.$$

In the above-mentioned case we have average weighed-up arithmetic value of X. In this case it is very simple to define the mode i.e. the most probable value of a variable.

In order to form groups of 6 types with a maximum number of students in each one is 4, testing is done. Number of groups can be defined with the following formula:

$$C_n^4 = \frac{n(n-1)(n-2)(n-3)}{4!},$$

where  $n$  – number of students in each group

$C_n^4$  – all possible combination to form a group.

Number of students left (M) after group formation

$$M = n - C_n^4 = n - \frac{n(n-1)(n-2)(n-3)}{4!}.$$

From remained students number of groups with 3 students

$$C_m^3 = \frac{m(m-1)(m-2)}{3!}.$$

From remained students number of groups with 2 students

$$C_m^2 = \frac{m(m-1)}{2!}.$$

where  $C_m^3 + C_m^2 \leq 3$ .

Teachers of large classes can organize the groups based on students' knowledge. Three types of groups can be organized:

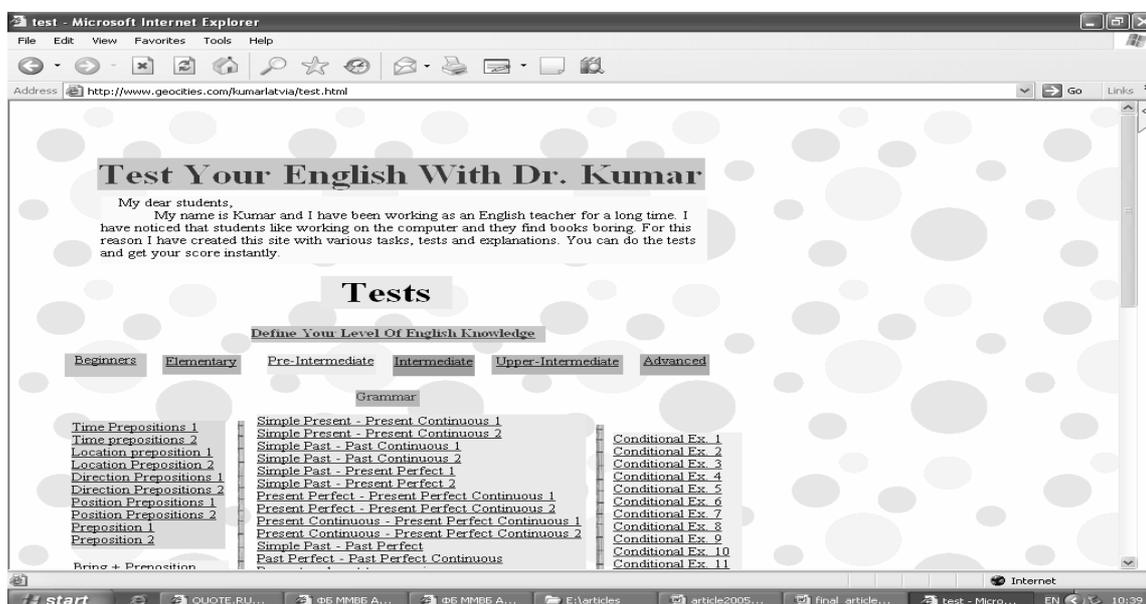
- same-ability groups,
- mixed-ability groups,
- using group leaders.

**Same-ability groups:** The students with the same levels can be grouped so that they will feel free working with others and teachers will not have to explain the things to each individual one. Such kinds of groups are really very good not only for teachers but also for students as the teacher can leave the groups of faster learners to get on with the work on their own. S/he can give extra help to individual learners in the slower groups. The teacher can just come around give some instruction or tasks to do if the group is strong and give more time to the group consists of students with lower level of the knowledge.

**Mixed-ability groups:** Such kind of groups can be organized to let more able students help the others. The more able learners in the group can help the others to master the work so that the teacher need not teach some parts. As the students work on their own the teacher gets free for other groups.

**Using group leaders:** In same-ability groups and mixed-ability groups some more able students can be appointed a leader of the group so that they can help others to understand the things better and faster. Some teachers appoint faster, more able learners as group leaders or monitors who can help slower learners.

As soon as a large class is divided into several small groups, a teacher can explain some themes to them and let students work in their own groups. A teacher can explain the theme with the help of computers. For instance, a teacher explains some grammar part to their students and asks them to take some online tests from my site. Research shows that students work with great pleasure on the computers and they are well-disciplined. A teacher has to just walk around from one group to another and listen to students' talk and make some comments.



WWW.geocities.com/kumarlatvia/test.html

A screenshot of my web page which is used for language teaching purpose

## Conclusion

Nowadays large classes are the biggest problem faced by educational institution specially while teaching languages. Language instructors cannot work effectively and efficiently in large classes. In order to work with good results language instructors ought to use modern technologies which can help them organize large class and their job as well. Modern information technology including internet resources provides not only students but also instructors with great possibilities for innovative outside classroom challenges in the teaching and learning of languages. The old-fashioned classroom-based approach of instruction where instructors do everything should not be used any more as instructors cannot provide students with versatile knowledge because of lack of authentic materials and time but at the same time use of internet resources can solve all these problems.

The research carried out at two higher educational institutes has proved that large classes are not a problem any more if language teaching and learning take place with the use of computers and classes are divided into different groups depending on students' knowledge of languages.

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### **Kumars M. Agarwals. VALODAS APGUVE LIELĀS AUDITORIJĀS, IZMANTOJOT TĪKLU TEHNOLOĢIJAS**

Šis raksts ir veltīgs CALL (valodas apguve ar datora palīdzību) programmas lietojuma priekšrocībām, kura ir paredzēta angļu valodas apgušanai lielās auditorijās.

Šajā darbā tiek aplūkotas atšķirības starp valodas mācīšanas klasiskajām un modernajām metodēm, t.i. izmantojot informāciju tehnoloģijas.

Pētījumi rāda, ka studenti strādājot ar datoru labāk risina uzdevumus un vieglāk mācās.

Lietojot tīmekli, izmantojot e-pastu, studenti iegūst iespēju sadarboties, strādāt kopā ar klases biedriem, pasniedzējiem, skolotājiem.

Šādā veidā mācības tiek pārveidotas no tradicionālās pasīvās vingrinājumu noklausīšanās par aizraujošu piedzīvojumu, kura laikā tiek atklātas un izpētītas jaunas lietas un jēdzieni.

Studenti var sākt apzināties savas potenciālās iespējas, ja viņiem ir sniegta iespēja ieguldīt savu darba daļu lielā kopīgā darbā, strādājot komandā, lai izpildītu lasīšanas un rakstīšanas vingrinājumus.

Līdz pat nesenam laikam valodas apmācība ar datoru (CALL) pārsvarā veica tie cilvēki, kuri interesējās tieši par šo zinību jomu.

Taču pēdējā laikā dators ir kļuvis tik izplatīts gan skolā, gan mājās un datora funkcijas ir tik ļoti paplašinājušās, ka svešvalodu pasniedzējiem ir labs iemesls aizdomāties par to, cik ļoti dators ir svarīgs apgūstot valodas.

Šajā rakstā tiek sniegts īss apskats par to, kā datoru var izmantot apgūstot valodu (Goyal, 2002).

Raksts nav veltīts datoru tehnisko specifikāciju un programmdrošinājuma aprakstam, bet gan pedagoģiskiem jautājumiem, kurus pasniedzējiem ir jārisina tad, kad dators tiek izmantots auditorijā mācot valodu.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** valodas mācīšanas veidi, informācijas tehnoloģijas, lielas auditorijas

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