Enhancing Student's Communicative Competence and Written Competence in English through Chatting and Blogging

Hitesh D. Raviya

Associate Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Arts,
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat.

Abstract

During the last decade, Computer and internet assisted language learning has been marching like anything in varieties of ways depending on need. As a result, it catered ample opportunities for the learner to study English with the use of innumerable internet resources. The advent of technology permits the learner to "talk" with each other and in multi-party talk or polyconversations while being physically distant. The present study attempts to explore pedagogical rationale for using chat rooms as language learning tool and how chatting practice, and its Conversation Analysis (CA), can be useful for the students to develop proficiency level. Chatting provides proper way to the learner to practice the new structures with the goal of testing sociolinguistic appropriateness. Chatting provides an opportunity to observe the interactions of native speakers around him.

This research paper aims at exploring how chatting helps the learner of language to understand the role of culture in language. It also lessens the fear in learning the second language. Chat activities promote the learner for active involvement and self analysis. The learner has the opportunity to observe and evaluate language used by native speakers. It provides the learner an opportunity to participate in a discussion. Research suggests that there are a variety of benefits for learners engaging in synchronous CMC activities including: high student participation; increased learner control; motivation; and development of interaction -competence. Furthermore, the study analyses how blogging helps the learner not only learning the language but also to enhance their creativity in writing of the targeted language. Blogging, as a medium to be socially connected, helps the learner to

acquire proficiency by identify some excellent expressions expressed by the language experts. Finally, the study also discusses how to engage students' reflective learning in English writing through the Blog.

Key Words: *Computer and internet assisted language learning, Conversation Analysis, CMC, Blogging.*

Introduction:

Technology contributes to the growth of language. The internet has created more and more opportunities to study English using a wide variety of the internet resources. Especially for the student whose first language is not English, these resources are important. They provide him with the opportunities for using English (Kitao and Kitao [1995]). During the last decade Computer and internet assisted language learning has been marching like anything in varieties of ways depending on need. As the Internet grows, there are more and more opportunities to students to study English using a wide variety of types of Internet resources. Integration of technology into teaching pedagogy has changed the way teacher used to teach and students used to learn. It has heralded a new era that is typically learners centre.

One potentially useful internet activity for the language student is chatting. Some sites on the internet are specifically intended for chatting. Chatting gives an opportunity to the learner to practice the new structures with the goal of testing sociolinguistic appropriateness. Chatting provides an opportunity to observe the interactions of native speakers around him. When language learners acquire new lexical items and grammatical forms, it is vital that they examine with their language helpers (native speakers they chat with) the kinds of changes which would be made to the new language data as a result of changes in the context. Today's youth, even children, use messengers to kill or pass the leisure time. So the word "Chatting" is very famous among them like plying game on computer. The advent of technology permits them to "talk" with each other and in multi-party talk or polyconversations while being physically distant. This research explores Pedagogical rationale for using chat rooms as language learning tool and how chatting practice, and its Conversation Analysis (CA), can be useful for the Student's Proficiency Level. This kind of research can be executed within the model of Computer-Internet-Mediated Discourse Analysis (Herring, 2004).

"Blog" is an abbreviation of "weblog,", used to describe web sites that maintain an ongoing chronicle of information. The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines the noun blog as, "2. A frequently updated web Site consisting of personal observations, excerpts from

other sources, etc., typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary." Blogs range from the personal to the political, and can focus on one narrow subject or a whole range of subjects. As blogs become more commonplace and widely used tool, educators in recent years have begun to use blogs for teaching and learning. Various researcher have been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of blog on learner autonomy, enhancing writing fluency, potential place for completing assignments (Ward, 2004; Wu, 2005), posting class material (Johnson, 2004), and as a way to communicate with bloggers outside the classroom (Pinkman, 2005).

Through CMC, language learners have the opportunity to communicate in meaningful ways and to be exposed to contextualized authentic language, two factors described as essential for the development of the communicative competence of learners (Luke, 2006). While Krashen (1981) asserted that comprehensible input was both a necessary and a sufficient condition for the acquisition of language, Ellis (1985, p. 161) sdid input and interaction influence second language acquisition. He listed eight characteristics of input and interaction which seem to facilitate rapid acquisition. They are:

(1) A high quantity of input directed at the learner.

(2) The learner's perceived need to communicate in the L2.

(3) Independent control of the propositional content by the learner (e.g., control over the topic

choice).

(4) Adherence to the "here and now" principle, at least initially.

(5) The performance of a range of speech acts by both the native speaker/teacher and the le arner (i.e., the learner needs the opportunity to listen to and to produce language used to

perform different language functions).

(6) Exposure to a high quantity of directives.

(7) Exposure to a high quantity of "extending" utterances, (e.g., requests for clarification and confirmation, paraphrases and expansions).

(8) Opportunities for uninhibited "practice" (which may provide opportunities to experiment

using "new" forms).

The above mentioned factors facilitated by Interaction. Interaction can involve a range of speech acts, a high quantity of directives and extending utterances, and opportunities to practice. Klein (1986, pp. 146-167) says that the more the learner interacts, the more language he/she has an opportunity to learn, and the more language he/she learns, the more input he/she can solicit in order to learn more language. At first, the learner uses whatever non-verbal means and small amount of verbal language he/she already knows.

Most of the learners produce language to be evaluated by the teacher, not for expressing their ideas. Even non-native English speakers who are in an English- speaking country might feel that they do not have enough opportunity to use English. They might

prefer chatting on the Internet because it is less stressful than using English face-to-face.

> "...the challenge for teachers often lies in moving students away from a mindset in which English is something learned through rote memorization for entrance exams, towards a view of English as a living language they can use to communicate with and learn about the world around them."

Muehleisen (1998: 69)

For language students who wish to be able to communicate in English, the Internet provides an important opportunity to learn English. People all over the world get connected through the Internet to share information, experiences, and opinions. Since it is a natural resource (i.e. not a text-book created for the purpose of language teaching through created dialogues), it presents real language. In chatting, basic textbook activities, like introducing oneself or talking about the weather become authentic, because learners constantly meet new participants. While using the Internet, learners have to read and write in English. And it helps them acquire the language.

As Fritzler (1995) pointed out,

> " In general, to use the Internet is to communicate"

Anderson, (1995)

By chatting, learners become acquainted with the nature of conversational language and at the same time it provides motivation to those learners who, due to their shyness, do not perform well in the activities like role-play. A look at some of the characteristics of spoken language given by Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy in Cambridge Grammar of English: A Comprehensive Guide will make it clear.

1. Sentences in the written sense are difficult to identify in spoken language. What seems more important is the production of adequate communicative units and the taking of turns rather than the transition from one sentence to another.

2. Speech is marked by small units of communication often consisting of just single words or phrases, rather than complete sentences. Like, Age? Where? Why'? Who? ASL Plz? Wanna chat'? What u do? Job? Where work?

3. Speakers' turns, unlike written sentences, are not neat and tidy. The speakers regularly interrupt each other, or speak at the same time, intervene in another's contribution or overlap in their speaking turns. And any transcript of a real conversation is much less tidy than the layout of a dialogue in a drama script or in a course book for learning a language.

4. Listeners are not just passive recipients. There are back-channel items (e.g. *Mm, Yeah,Hnunmm,Yah00000,grr888),* by which listeners give feedback, and other (normally supportive) responses (e.g. *Right).*

5. There are abandoned or incomplete structures (e.g. *It was a bit enn … A bit.).* 'Incomplete' structures rarely cause any problem of understanding, and can be collaboratively completed by others.

6. Ellipsis is common (e.g. [it] *All looks great.).* Ellipsis occurs when words usually considered 'obligatory' (e.g. a subject for a verb in a declarative clause) are not needed because they can be understood from the immediate context or from the knowledge which is shared between speakers. For speakers and listeners, there are no words 'missing', and what we call ellipsis is simply an economical and sufficient form of communication...

The Oxford Dictionary Online defines the term blog as "2. A frequently updated web site consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc., typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary." Blog is a personal space where one can express himself and others can read, comment, and enjoy others write up. Blog allows to upload photos, audio clips and video clips. The application of blog in education has immense importance as it provides a real audience for students, it provides extra reading practice for students, it encourages students to participate and above all it creates online portfolio of students written work. Blog creates classroom environment or learning environment outside the classroom. Particularly when they enable uploading and linking of files. Three types of blogs have been described for use in English writing class by Campbell (2003): the tutor blog; the learner blog; and the class blog. The tutor blog is run by the tutor for the learner, and its purpose is to give reading practice to the learners, promote exploration of English websites, encourage online exchange by use of comment buttons, provide class or syllabus information, and serve as a resource of links for self-study. Learner blogs are run by individual learners themselves. Learner blogs are best suited for English reading and writing classes. The class blog is the result of the collaborative effort of an entire class. It can be used for posting messages, images, and links related to classroom discussion topics in English. Class blogs could also be used as a virtual space for an international classroom language exchange (Campbell, 2003).

Since 1998, weblogs (or "blogs") have gained increasing notice in the cyberspace community, more and more foreign educators have applied this user-friendly technology to classroom instruction and language learning (Campbell, 2003; Johnson, 2004); however, it seems that relatively few English teachers have ever used blogs in an EFL writing class around us. Implementation of Blog into classrooms has the following advantages:

- It Facilitating the Students' Analytical Thinking Skills.
- It Provides students with the examples of Model writing for LEARNING.

- It Allows Self-Expression with Self-Evaluation.
- It Allows Peer Review to Improve the quality of Writing.
- It gives an Open Space and for Purposive Writing.
- It Promotes Interaction between/among Students and TEACHERS.
- Interaction Motivates Writing.

In a Nut Shell, Chatting and Blogging are very versatile communication medium for using in educational pedagogy. These both effective tools have emerged as an effective self learning tool. The attention is shifted from teachers to students. blogs become more and more commonplace, educators in recent years have begun seeing the potential of blogs for teaching and learning. Studies that have been published include research on blogging's effect on learner autonomy, increasing writing fluency, as a place for completing writing assignments (Ward, 2004; Wu, 2005), posting class materials (Johnson, 2004), and as a way to open communication with bloggers outside the classroom (Pinkman, 2005). It must be noted that by chatting learners can stay in touch with the language in use. Language teachers can use chat in the classroom or can introduce students to chat so that they can go on the Internet and chat individually.

Work Cited

- **Ballou, E. G.** (2002). *Teaching language and culture with computer-mediated communications technologies.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst.
- **Bernstein, M.** *Do We Blogs Improve Writing?* From http://markbernstein.org/Jan0401.html#note_35302. 2008-1-29.
- **Blood, R.** 2002. *Weblogs: A history and perspective*. Cambridge: Perseus Publishing.
  Campbell, A. P. 2003. Weblogs for Use with ESL Classes. *The Internet TESL Journal,* 9(2): 33-35.
- **Campbell, A. P.** 2004. Using Live Journal for Authentic Communication in EFL Classes. *The Internet TESL Journal,* 10(9):64-68.
- **Chapelle, C.** 2003. *English Language Learning and Technology: Lectures on Applied Linguistics in the Age of Information and Communication Technology.* Amsterdam: Benjamins.

- **Dewey, J.** 1933. *How We Think*. New York: D. C. Heath.
- **Dieu, B.** 2004. Blogs for Language Learning. *Essential Teacher*, 1: 26-30.
- **Eastman, D.** 2005. Blogging. *English Language Teaching Journal,* 59 (4).
- **Egbert, J.** 2006. The End of CALL and How to Achieve it. *Teaching English with Technology: A Journal for Teachers of English,* 6 (2).
- **Ellis, R**. (1985). Understanding second language acquisition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Fritzler, K.** (1995). The Internet as an Educational Tool in ESOL Writing Instruction. MA Thesis. http://thecity.sfsu.edui-funweb/thesis.htm
- **Galina Kavaliauskien**e. 2006. Application of Blogging for Learner Development. *Journal of Language and Learning,* 2 (4).
- **Godwin-Jones, B.** 2003. Blogs and Wikis: Environments for On-line Collaboration. *Language Learning & Technology,* 7 (2).
- **Johnson, A.** 2004. Creating a Writing Course Utilizing Class and Student Blogs. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 10 (8).

- **Kitao, K., & Kitao, S.K**. (1995). Internet Resources for linguistics, language teaching, and communication.
- **Klein, W**. (1986). Second language acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Krashen, S.D.** (1981). Second language acquisition and second language learning. Oxford: Pergamon.
- **Luke, C. L.** (2006). Situating CALL in the broader methodological context of foreign language teaching and learning: Promises and possibilities. In L. Ducate & N. Arnold (Eds.), *Calling on CALL: From theoty and research to new directions in foreign language teaching* (pp.21-42). Texas: CALICO Monograph Series.
- **Muehleisen, V.** (1998). Motivating language learning through email exchange. In P. Lewis (Ed.), Teachers, learners, and computers: Exploring relationships in CALL (pp. 69-74). Nagoya: The Japan Association for Language Teaching Computer- Assisted Language Learning Special Interest Group.
- **Pinkman, K.** 2005. Using Blogs in the Foreign Language Classroom: Encouraging Learner Independence. *The JALT CALL Journal,* 1 (1).

- **Thorne, S. L.** (2005). Pedagogical and praxiological lessons from Internet- mediated intercultural foreign language education research. In J. A. Belz & S. L. Thorne (Eds.), *Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education* (pp. 2- 30). AAUSC, Boston: Thomson Heinle.
- **Ward, J.** 2004. Blog Assisted Language Learning: Push Button Publishing for the Pupils. *TEFL Web Jo* 3(1).

- **Walker, J.** 2005. Weblogs: Learning in Public. *On the Horizon*, 13 (2).
  Wu, W. *Using* Blogs in an EFL Writing Class. *Paper Presented at the 2005 International Conference o TEFL and Applied Linguistics*.   from: www.chu.edu.tw/wswu/publications/papers/conferences/05.pdf 2007-10-13.