

Can Computer-naive Language Teachers Build Flexible and Interactive Components for Language Courses: A Case Study

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Abstract

With the excessive use of ICT and other IT components in language courses for every levels in the past few decades, design and development of teaching and learning activities in language courses seem to be dominated by computer experts. Language teachers or instructors are either become co-workers of computer programmers, IT designers and content developers or needed to be trained as experts of IT. However, we cannot conclude that teachers are of little contribution on building and development processes of language courses in the IT world. This paper reports on the process of design and development of how a comprehensive and complicated web-based listening component for university students to enhance their language learning can be built by computer-naive language teachers.

In 2008, we launched the Professional Presentation Supporting Project. The objective of this project is to provide extra self-training materials for university students to enhance their verbal presentation skills in Chinese language. We designed, developed and delivered teaching materials, learning tasks, multimedia clips, ebooks etc. with WebCT. Further to that, ICT components like text-to-speech engine are ready on an independent server to built a content-independent listening environment. By 2011, these components are ready to run on mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones.

The conclusion of this paper is that although many language teachers are not experts in computer technology, a right choice of server, software and learning platform can mitigate anxiety of IT and also deminish the design and development time, and students can still have a flexible and interactive learning environment. It can also elevate cost effectiveness of university language courses. Last but not the least, it can help language teachers to regain control over the development of the course and build ready-to-use ICT components that will better suit for teaching and learning.