can often enlist the learners' help in the innovative process of creating online content, encouraging them to be active participants on the Net, or *productive consumers*[1]. As Marandi (ibid.) points out, "If handled tastefully, this would lead to the further development of the learners' English performance and communicative skills, and would also encourage dialog among different cultures." There are numerous ways of doing this, from the creation/use of weblogs, wikis and podcasts, to online cultural exchanges through forums, email, etc.

This does not mean to encourage the unbridled production of online content at any cost, however. There is little merit in producing for production's sake, and many would argue that there is enough useless content on the Internet already. In fact, you may remember from the second article in this series (Marandi, 2011a) that Franklin (1999, cited in Chapelle, 2003) equated the Internet to a giant garbage dump! And read Bowers (2000) for a thought-provoking discussion of how even highly-applauded educational software can still lead to "ecologically destructive patterns" (p. 129) and "problematic cultural patterns of thinking" (p. 130). I also advise you to read Keen (2007) for a heated, intriguing and sometimes contentious discussion of how the online mass production perpetrated by the "noble amateur" through blogging, YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, etc. is destroying culture. All these serve to indicate that online production requires at least as much critical thinking as online consumption! However, this should not scare us off and stop us from trying; it merely signifies the importance of careful planning.

Task 3: Think of ways that you and/or your students can make meaningful online contributions while preserving your native identities. Which language skills would be addressed? According to which learning theories?

Next time, we will explore one of the many possible answers to Task 3, by discussing the potentials of a very common yet useful online, language-mediated tool. Which, you ask? Keep guessing…

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Note

1. Productive consumption has been defined as "when the goods are not meant for final consumption but for producing other goods which will satisfy human wants, e.g. use of fertilizer in agriculture" ("Meaning of consumption and their classification," n.d.). It appears to have its roots in fields such as agriculture, marketing, and the like, but it has also been appropriated for cultural/educational productions, as well.

the simplest and most innocent of them being unequal access. In fact, I would argue that one of the reasons that the Internet is not always a reliable source for information is that it largely represents the ideas of the privileged people of each country and of the world at large. Put in other words, at the very least (and even putting aside political power), it represents the collective websites, posts and contributions of those who have not only (the often costly) access, but also the know-how (i.e., sufficient information as well as familiarity/comfort with the use of new technologies), as well as (in most cases) adequate command of English and acquaintance with certain aspects of the Western culture. This often entails knowing something of the international audience you are potentially addressing, as well as discerning how you are most likely to make yourself heard and to persuade them to embrace your ideas.

Be productive

So far in these "do-it-yourself" CALL articles you have learnt a lot about how to be good "consumers" of the Internet; for example, which websites provide (un)reliable information, how to tell if a link is safe or not, being wary of the (intentional or unintentional) hidden agenda of educational programs, etc. However, at the end of the day a responsible CALL teacher will not limit her/his class to the mere consumption of other people's contributions. Marandi (2010, p. 185) stresses that one of the important obligations of a CALL teacher should be considered "the creation of more websites that are useful, motivating, and safe" instead of "limiting ourselves to only hunting down the problematic ones." This is doubly important for countries/cultures which are underrepresented or misrepresented on the Internet, such as Iran and the Iranian culture. And incidentally, such content creation need not be limited to websites and the Internet, since there is an equally compelling need for indigenous language teaching software, as well.

In the case of the Internet, the teacher

influences they are exposed to via computer software and the Internet. A simple example is demonstrated in Karimi Alavijeh's PhD dissertation (forthcoming), entitled, *Internet-Mediated English Teaching: The Promotion of Electronic Colonialism?* Karimi asked a number of Iranian EFL teachers which websites they used most for their English classes. Ironically, some of the websites ranking highest on the list were openly hostile toward Iran, such as VoA English and BBC, among others.

Task 2: Make a list of all the websites you regularly use. How many conform to your national and Islamic identity? Now specify how many of these are in English? Are you represented adequately and fairly on the Internet? Is your culture/nationality/ideology accorded the respect it demands?

A popular myth about the Internet which is propagated not just by the uninitiated, but even by some very experienced users of the Internet is that it gives equal voice to haves and have-nots alike. It is mistakenly assumed that since, potentially, everybody can publish on the "World Wide Web," it is democratic and egalitarian. For example, Richardson (2010) describes Tim Berners-Lee's "grand vision" (p. 1) of a Read/Write Web which would allow people from all over the world to meet and collaborate. He then celebrates, "The Read/Write Web has arrived," (p. 2), continuing:

> No matter how you look at it, we are creating what author Douglas Rushkoff calls a "society of authorship" where every teacher and every student—every person with access—will have the ability to contribute ideas and experiences to the larger body of knowledge that is the Internet. And in doing so, Rushkoff says, we will be writing the human story, in real time, together—a vision that asks each of us to participate (p. 5).

What neither Rushkoff nor Richardson seem to take into account is that the Internet is still controlled in understated but powerful ways by a myriad of stakeholders. As just one example, I refer you to Goldsmith and Wu's (2008) book: *Who controls the Internet? Illusions of a borderless world,* what they call "the story of the death of the dream of self-governing cyber-communities that would escape geography forever" (p. xi). As people who themselves subscribe to the controversial necessity of government "coercion," the themes of their widely-cited book are as follow: "the importance of governmental coercion to Internet activities; the trend toward geographical bordering of the Internet as a result of top-down government coercion and bottom-up consumer demand; and the many virtues, and undeniable vices, of a bordered Net" (p. x).

From the other side of the globe, Anatoly Voronov, director of the Russian Internet service provider, is quoted as having said:

> It is just incredible when I hear people talking about how open the Web is. It is the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism….if you are talking about a technology that is supposed to open the world to hundreds of millions of people you are joking. This just makes the world into new sorts of haves and have nots (Crystal, 1997, p. 108).

While Voronov is referring to the way people are required to "adapt to English" (p. 108) on the Internet, there are obviously a multitude of other ways in which the Internet could be said to contribute to the dividing the world into new "haves/have-nots,"

since its publication in 2003:

Butler-Pascoe, M. E. & Wiburg, K. M. (2003). *Technology and teaching English language learners.* MA: Allyn and Bacon.

There are, of course, numerous other good books on CALL, including those focused primarily on the theories of CALL. Some of these books are extremely thought-provoking and scholarly, and are obviously a necessary complement to anyone intending to take CALL seriously. They do not receive mention here, however, as they are less relevant to the current discussion, which is intended to be more practice-oriented.

Be focused on language learning

With all the interesting distractions provided by using technology in class, it is sometimes difficult to stay centered and concentrate on what you were actually hired for: teaching people English! This is not meant to deny the current link between technology and English. And Mark Warschauer (2002) seems to have a point when he states:

> a high school English teacher expressed his view that "English is not an end in itself, but just a tool for being able to make use of information technology" (personal communication, August 24, 2000), thus standing on its head what I see as the perspective of CALL proponents. Although I understand the teacher's sentiment, I would suggest instead that both English and information technology are tools—to allow individuals to participate fully in society (p. 456).

Nevertheless, if your students are learning more technology than English, you're probably not on the right track! So be true to your education, experience, and principles as a language teacher. And continue to broaden your knowledge of TEFL as a field.

Be realistic

Many teachers who are new to CALL naively believe that classes including some form of digital technology are by nature more effective than "traditional" classes, and that computer-assisted language learning will of itself improve the quality of the instruction as well as the learners' motivation. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Healey (1999) aptly puts it, "Technology alone does not create language learning any more than dropping a learner into the middle of a large library does" (p. 136).

On the other hand, the difficulties of computer-based instruction may often be different from those of face-to-face instruction, but they can be equally worrisome. As an example, in a study on using the Internet for English reading classes, Marandi (2011b) cites the following problems, among others: distractions caused by technology and leading to a waste of time, plagiarism and frequent copy/pasting on behalf of the students, stress created by technology in the learners, and the increased responsibility of the teacher. (Perhaps I should point out that the demerits appeared to have been balanced out by the merits, but that's a different story.)

Be wary

You may remember that in the second article of this series (Marandi, 2011a), the importance of adopting a critical approach to CALL was emphasized, and the non-neutrality of technology as well as the "hegemonies of CALL" (Lamy & Pegrum, cited in Marandi, 2011a, p. 22) were also discussed. Bowers (2000), for example, considers that "the most dominant characteristic of a computer" is its being "a cultural mediating and thus transforming technology" (p. vii). The problem is that most people are not even aware of the often subtle

language classes and yet which requires only a minimum level of familiarity with computers and the Internet on your part. However (here comes the bad news!), there are still a few last-minute caveats that merit your attention before we actually take the plunge. So without further ado:

Be prepared

This is so self-evident as to appear almost a truism, since all good teaching requires preparation; however, a CALL class requires more than most. Try to think things out in advance, and have exigency plans for those days when everything seems to be going wrong! A good CALL teacher will always have an alternative lesson plan in mind, or will be flexible enough to adapt the current lesson plan to the unexpected demands of the new situation at hand; for example, those occasions when the computers are failing to work, the Internet connection is too slow, there is a power cut in the middle of class, the key to the computer lab has been misplaced by the last teacher to use it, or the website you have created is unexpectedly filtered. (You may find it encouraging or discouraging to know that I have personally experienced all of the above…and yet I have survived!)

Task 1: Make a list of things that could go wrong in a technology-based language class. What kind of preparation would allow you to triumph over such difficulties? Could you turn such occasions to your advantage?

Sometimes the exigency plans might entail forgoing the use of technology for a particular session or even longer, depending on the nature of the problem. Sometimes, however, it may require a change in the type of technology you are using or in how you are using. In any case, it is important to bear in mind that the ideas you come up with *should be in line with your particular syllabus and lesson plan.*

The following books are full of ideas for applying technology in class (all may be found at the library of the Faculty of Literature and Languages of Alzahra University); remember, however, that it is your personal responsibility to adopt/adapt those which specifically suit your syllabus and principles. And in fact the mere inclusion of these admittedly useful books in the article is not necessarily intended as a complete endorsement of any of them:

Bender, W. N. & Waller, L. B. (2013). *Cool tech tools for lower tech teachers: 20 tactics for every classroom.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin (SAGE).

Manning, S. & Johnson, K. E. (2011). *The technology tool belt for teaching.* San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (Wiley).

Richardson, W. (2010). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms.* (3rd ed.). London: Corwin (SAGE).

Stanley, G. (2013). *Language learning with technology: Ideas for integrating technology in the classroom.* Cambridge: CUP.

Teeler, D. & Gray, P. (2000). *How to use the internet in ELT.* Essex: Longman.

Note that the above list consists mainly of activity books which introduce various online tools and provide suggestions on how you can create a lesson plan around those tools. They are for the main part focused on quick and practical solutions. However, while they are each useful in their own way, some lack the necessary depth that can only be created through linking such activities to acceptable language learning/teaching theories. For those interested in a book with such an orientation, I suggest reading the following, bearing in mind that some of the learning theories presented in it may have changed

Do-it-yourself: Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Adopting a Balanced Approach toward CALL

Classroom Techniques

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اشاره

مقاله‌ای که پیش روی شماســت هفتمین مقاله از مجموعه مقاله‌های مربوط به آموزش زبان به کمک فن‌آوری اســت. در مقالهٔ پیشین نحوهٔ تشخیص وبگاه‌های مطمئن و بی‌خطر مورد بحث قرار گرفت. در این شماره سعی بر این است که نحوهٔ اتخاذ رویکردی متوازن با آموزش زبان به کمک فناوری بررسی شود. در این راستا به موضوعات نظیر تربیت معلم، داشتن انتظارات واقع‌گرایانه، اتخاذ رویکردی انتقادی به آموزش زبان به کمک فناوری و همچنین استفاده کاربردی از آن مبتنی بر انتخاب کاربر پرداخته می‌شود.

Abstract

The article before you is the seventh of a series of articles on computer-assisted language learning (i.e., CALL) appearing in Roshd FLT magazine approximately twice a year since the fall of 2011. The previous articles dealt with the basics of CALL, as well as appropriate online behavior; online privacy and safety; and recognizing reliable, safe websites. The current article deals with how to maintain a balanced approach toward CALL, covering issues such as teacher preparation; focusing on language learning; having realistic expectations; adopting a critical approach toward CALL; and selective, productive consumption.

Key Words: teacher preparation, critical CALL, productive consumption

On the way to getting started with CALL

This article opens with good news: We are on the verge of finally exploring some online tools for use in the language classroom! In fact, God willing, the article following this will deal with a simple yet popular online tool which has great potential for