



Learning Technologies and Learner Autonomy

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Learning Technologies in ELT

CALL and Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy in EAP and ESP

Overview of Current Trends





Introduction (1)

- The Use of **learning technologies (LT)** in language Education has been influencing the nature and pedagogy of ELT more than two decades in Japan.
- However, the explosion of interest in **LT** in foreign language education has not been unanimously accepted.
 - **Optimists (Sakamoto, 1992; Van Duesen, 1997; Bennett, 1999)** vs **Realists (Knobel, Lankshear, et al., 1998; Selwyn, 1999)**



Introduction (2)

- **CALL researchers (Laurillard & Marullo, 1993; Kuramoto, 1999) argue that LT provide a means to facilitate the L2 learner's internal thought process.**
- **It also acts as a psychological tool, enabling the individual to engage in the higher mental functioning that comes from interactions with social life a la **Vygotsky (1978)**.**



Introduction (3)

- It is argued that **LT** has the potential to become the medium within the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** that promotes learning.
- The **ZPD** refers to the **cognitive** development that occurs in a social nature with **cognitive support** from a more capable person (**Jones & Mercer, 1993**).





Introduction (4)

- An issue of teaching approaches and pedagogy with **CALL** is the conflict of providing only **computer-mediated instruction** and not an environment of collaborative communication.
- **Marjonavic (1999)** argued that “rather than adopting old teaching methods along with new information technologies, it is necessary to investigate new previously unknown possibilities offered by new technologies and design new methodologies for learning and teaching” (p. 138)



Introduction (5)

- In Japan, **LT** in EFL has seemingly been overlooked under a plan called, **E-Japan Strategy (2001-05)** and current **New IT Reform Strategy**.
- A reason for such an oversight could be as **Bachnik (1999)** has explained, ... **ICT** poses such a challenge to Japan because the system itself is precisely what is at stake here...
- Against such obstacles, **CALL** is not always widely supported.



Introduction (6)

- Additional issues have provided an excellent spring board for **CALL** teachers to conduct more research.
- A positive development of **CALL** research has been a transformation from youthful awe and excitement about new **LT** to a mature and directed pedagogical and philosophical focus with questions raised and answers sought. **Learner autonomy** is one of the major concerns.

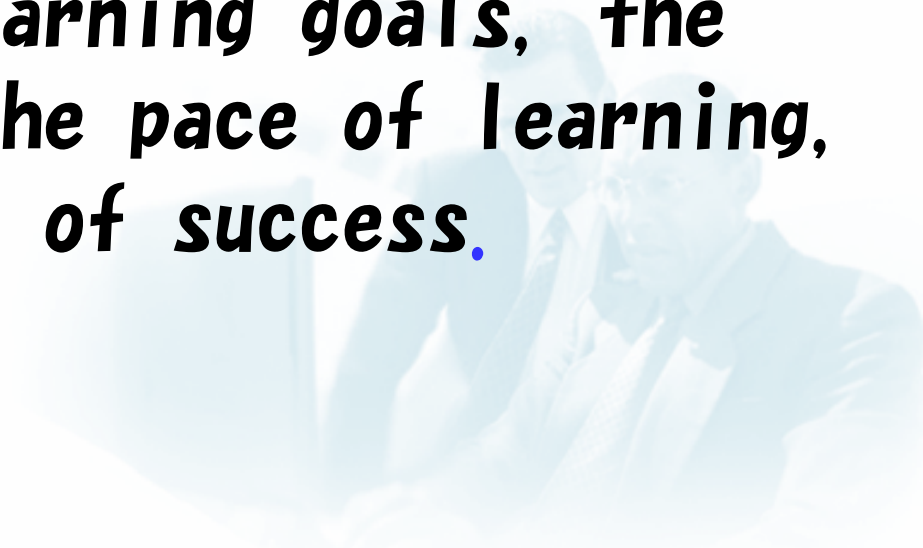
Some of the most well known definitions in present literature are:

- **Autonomy** is the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Henri Holec)
- **Autonomy** is essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning' (David Little)
- **Autonomy** is a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his [or her] learning and the implementation of those decisions'. (Leslie Dickinson)
- **Autonomy** is a recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems'. (Phil Benson)
- Taken from Gardner and Miller, *Establishing Self-Access from theory to practice*. CUP (1999)



CALL and Learner Autonomy (1)

- A definition of **autonomy** in language learning is based on **Dickinson's (1987)** in referring to the **instructional framework**: the degree of independence the learner is given in setting language learning goals, the path to the goal, the pace of learning, and the measurement of success.





CALL and Learner Autonomy (2)

- The terms "self-direction" and "independent learning" will be used to refer to learner attitudes. In looking at autonomy, the self-access setting can offer learners choices in time, location, and pace of learning: the path through the material to be chosen: and the topics of interest. LT can play a role in all of these.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (3)

- Today, language teachers see independent learning as a goal. It is part of Rubin's (1979) definition of the "good" language learner: one who sets his or her own direction and takes responsibility for his or her own learning. Certain metacognitive skills are necessary for independent learning, including awareness of learning styles and the ability to track one's own progress.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (4)

- EFL learners have certain cultural expectations about teacher and student roles. For many, the teacher has the duty to impart knowledge to them, and their duty as learners is to memorize it. This attitude is clearly not conducive to self-direction.
- **Oxford (1990)** notes, "Just teaching new strategies to students will accomplish very little less students begin to *want* greater responsibility for their own learning" (p. 10: italics in original).



CALL and Learner Autonomy (5)

- On the other hand, studies in Japan (Usuki, 2001) and Hong Kong (Chan, 2001) indicate that some students realize that they could take better advantage of resources by being more independent. If we want to encourage independent learning, we will need to give learners good reasons for moving in that direction.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (6)

- **LT's** role in fostering **autonomy** has been vaunted over the years, with a number of claims made in favor of **technology-enhanced language learning**. Those claims include that **LT**, especially **multimedia**, supports different learning styles: that computers and the **Internet** provide a wealth of resources to **independent learners**; and that certain software packages can offer a complete curriculum for language learning. These claims need to be put into the context of learner needs to see how fully they match.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (7)

- EFL Learners have a number of needs for effective language learning, including linguistic, metacognitive, and psychological and social.
- In the linguistic area, people must have language data and an opportunity for practice in order to acquire or learn language. Sequencing instruction, offering language data at Krashen's $i+1$ level of **comprehensibility**, providing rules for deductive learners, and sheltering practice all enhance learning.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (8)

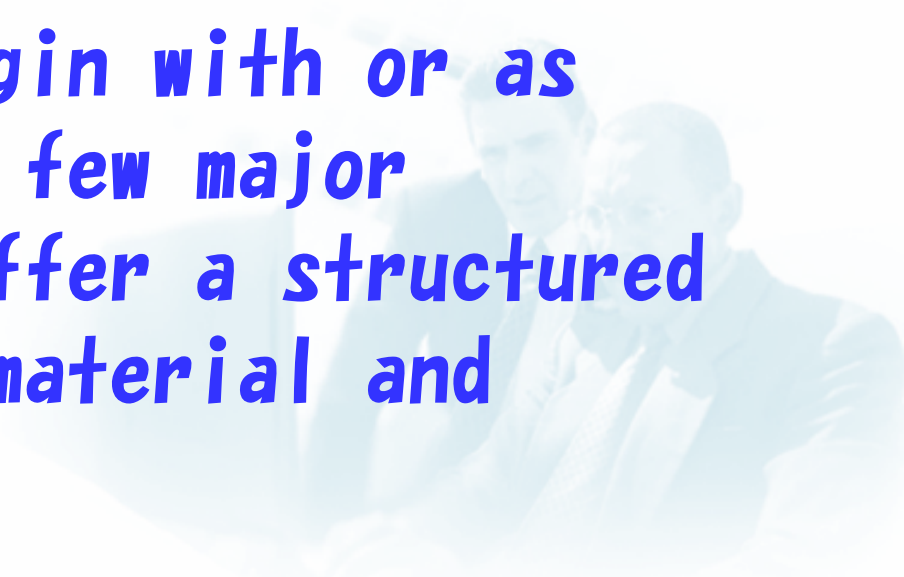
- **On the metacognitive level, learners do well by knowing their learning styles, understanding their path through the material to be learned, and having a way to see and assess their own progress toward learning goals.**





CALL and Learner Autonomy (9)

- **LT** offers a great deal on the **linguistic side**: huge amounts of data, including authentic text, graphics, audio, and video online.
- Software and online exercises can provide rules to begin with or as glosses for data. A few major software packages offer a structured path through their material and record-keeping. .





CALL and Learner Autonomy (10)

- Another area where **LT** are useful is in providing practice in various ways. While the practice is often repetitive, much more is possible.
- Variety and playfulness of **language games** improve the fun factor. **Concordancers** allow learners to explore language and develop their own hypotheses for how language works, based on large textbases.
- **LT** provides tools for learners to create newsletters, web pages, and **multimedia** presentations, as well as to create online communities of interest.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (11)

- **CALL** activities are designed to develop a comprehensive range of skills and attitudes including motivation, learning strategies, self-monitoring and cooperation. The activities can be easily integrated into the regular curriculum as almost all serve some linguistic purpose in addition to learner development. While productive practice is possible, repetition is easier to automate and so is far more prevalent in both software and online activities.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (12)

- A curricular path that links past with present information and helps learners **self-assess** is rarely found outside of software, and not frequently in software, either. Very little of what is available in off-the-shelf form develops learners' **metacognitive** skills, helping them understand how to learn and how to be **reflective learners**.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (13)

- **Very importantly, ready-made LT solutions rarely provide any engagement with the local community.**
- **It is up to facilitators and teachers to make the links between what the learner is doing *independently* and what is going on in the classroom or the home.**





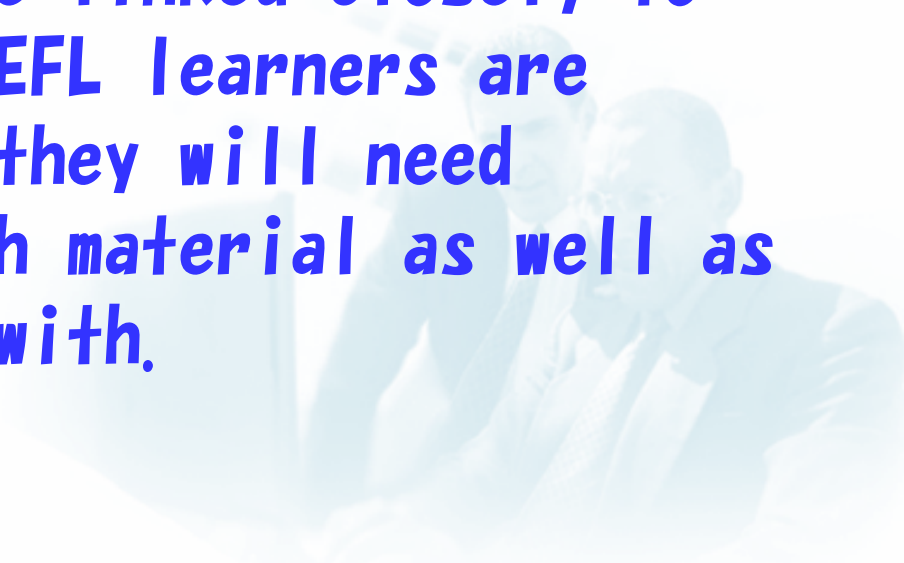
CALL and Learner Autonomy (14)

- Other drawbacks exist as well. A concern frequently expressed in the hypertext literature is that EFL learners can get lost when working through material with hypertext links. Given a wealth of choices, EFL learners can feel overwhelmed and unable to decide what to do. Aimless clicking often results. Repetitive practice or a repetitive interface can be boring. They can benefit from language software, certainly, but have other needs as well. **LT** can provide a too simple solution.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (15)

- **LT** can do much more within an environment designed to enhance **independent learning**. EFL learners don't necessarily know how to learn efficiently on their own, so guidance has to come from somewhere.
- **Independent work** can be linked closely to EFL curriculum. Where EFL learners are working on their own, they will need suggested paths through material as well as language data to work with.





CALL and Learner Autonomy (16)

- Facilitators serve an important role by helping learners assess where they are and understand where they need to go next, helping EFL learners organize their learning and be motivated to continue.
- It's easy to be passive, so EFL learners may need help setting and accomplishing tasks that require production. Facilitators also help organize community, setting up groups, providing logistics for group projects, and making the links between **independent study** and classroom and home.



CALL and Learner Autonomy (17)

- Creating a good **autonomous** learning environment is difficult. It takes thought and planning initially and an ongoing commitment to adjusting to EFL learners' needs.
- It is important to keep **psychological and social factors** in mind to be sure that individual learning is within a supportive community context. **LT** provides a wealth of resources and potential, but is not a solution on its own.



Learner Autonomy in EAP & ESP (1)

- To be successful for an academic work while studying **EAP** and **ESP**, students need to have the basic study skills and strategies with **active learning attitude** in advance. Unfortunately most Japanese high school graduates coming into universities are not well-prepared.
- They need to take some study skills and strategies training at the beginning of the first semester in a variety of styles such as small class seminars in each department or a part of **CALL** program. (e. g., Ritsumeikan University CISE)



Learner Autonomy in EAP & ESP (2)

- **There are many online study skills and strategies programs or their textbooks designed and available to native speakers of English students, but they are not appropriate for EFL learners to use under the current curriculum.**
- **Such study skills and strategies training programs must be implemented at the beginning of the 1st semester to be academically successful at Japanese universities.**



Learner Autonomy in EAP & ESP (3)

While studying **EAP** and **ESP** contents, to promote **learner autonomy**, for example, **RU CISE students** are given a partial training through **CALL** to understand their own learning styles and computer literacy skills:

- What successful students have done:
- What each student should do to be successful:



- For online tasks on **ESP** contents which supplement the textbooks, motivated students can access to the original **ESP** Website and complete them in advance or later review them.
- Also being accessible to students' grade system (**php + MySQL database**) for registered EFL classes, they can check their weekly performance results on line and **motivate** themselves to get better final grades.

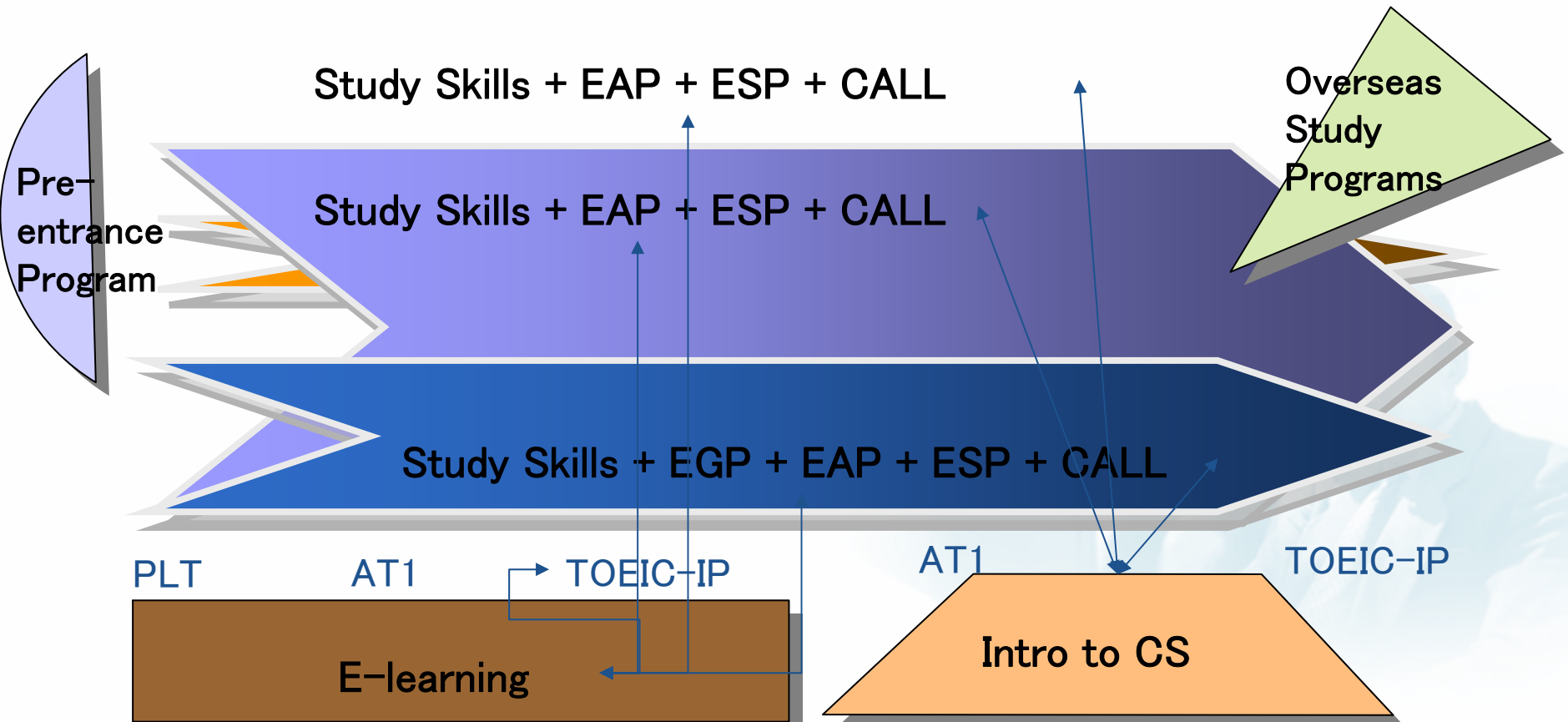


Example (Rits CISE ELP)

Pre-Intermediate Level

Intermediate Level

Upper Intermediate



- Online quizzes, tests, exercises and puzzles via the **Internet** and/or **Intranet** or CD/DVD technology can help students learn or improve the basics (listening, vocabulary, reading, grammar, writing, speaking, cultural awareness) for EFL.
- Hardware changes quickly with LT advancement: Desktop PC → Laptop PC/PDA/mobile phone/iPod




Conclusion (1)

- **Learner Autonomy with LT** helps learners realize that their contribution to the teaching-learning process is crucial and also encourages them to take an active role in their own learning. ← **Self-Access Resource Center** should be established.
- Rather than advocating radical changes in classroom management, it should be focused on the gradual process of changing learner attitudes.



Conclusion (2)

- EFL students should be given **learner autonomy** training sessions “before” and “during” the program with three key kinds of preparations:
 - Psychological preparation,
 - Methodological preparation and
 - Practice in self-direction.
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Conclusion (3)

- As **Little (1996)** pointed out to be **autonomous** “learners need to establish a personal agenda for learning, taking some of the initiatives that shape the learning process, and developing a capacity to evaluate the extent and success of one’s learning” thus, there is a direct need to come up with **innovative** programs that will promote **autonomy** among Japanese students. The implementation of an online language-learning program is a “**must**” effort in this direction.



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