Community Language Learning

In **Community Language Learning** the teacher acts as a facilitator whose job it is to be an empathetic helper in the learning process and so lower the affective filter. The students are perceived of as being a "group" receiving counselling rather than a "class".

The students typically sit in a circle, and they initially use their first language to get to know each other. When they wish to say something in English the teacher translates it for them. The idea is that over a period of time they become independent of the teacher and able to converse on their own.

See also

- Community Language Learning (CLL) – Methodology of FLT (http://uastudent.com/community-language-learning-cll-methodology-of-flt/)

References

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It was developed by Charles A. Curran (1972) and his associates. It belongs to a large set of foreign language teaching practices described as humanistic techniques		
Main Purpose	**Theory of Language**	**Theory of Language Learning**
To emphasize the role of the affective domain, promoting cognitive learning.	Language is taken primarily as a social factor, which is used to exchange ideas, feelings an dmeanings.	The language is learned through social interaction and support from others who pursue the same goals.
Salient Feature	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
Helps in the process of personal understanding of values and goals,in community with others pursuing the same goals.	• Using the target language in real situations. • The student's role is active. • Lowers ansiety. • Promotes social interaction.	• Little emphasis in the target culture. • The teacher must be highly competent in order to help their students.

	• Improves listening skills. • Engages students. • Four basic skills are developed.	used in large groups.
Learning Model Cognositivism	**Related Teaching Strategies and Techniques** • Scaffolding. • Group work. • Translations. • Reflection and observation. • Analysis and reflection. • Recording.	**Related links** Community Language Learning CLL Article - British Council

Community Language Classes: How Ready are Students for More Technology?

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Introduction

In recent years, computer-based resources (e-resources) have found wide-spread use in most foreign language teaching settings (see for instance Chapelle 2010). Two strands of applications are of particular interest: applications supporting collaborative learning (such as wikis, discussion boards, and virtual worlds) which have been suggested to improve motivation to learn a foreign language (for instance Wehner 2011 or Kinginger 2007), and applications which allow self-directed learning (such as learning platforms with links to self-access online exercises, reading exercises, comprehension exercises or foreign language sites). Self-access learning has been heralded as "a powerful tool" for independent and lifelong learning (Miller, Tsang and Hopkins 2007:221) and it is thought that self-access learning tools are of particular use to the needs of adult learners "with the attributes of self-direction, i.e. knowing their own learning needs" (Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997:95). However, some community language classes are still making little use of technology and this is partly due to an uncertainty towards the level of skills and motivation of students. Community classes are open to all and are attended by a diverse body of students of mixed backgrounds and ages. Recent research is recognising the diversity of adult learners (Adams and Nicolson 2011), and meeting the needs of these diverse learners is seen as key to their successful learning (Nicolson and Adams 2010).

The present paper aims to describe the diversity of adult language learners in regard to their technological preparedness (e-readiness). The paper reports on a survey conducted at the community language classes run by a large university in the UK. The language school was interested in making greater use of computer-based technology (such as wikis and learning platforms) in order to support learning, but needed evidence about students' e-readiness for a successful implementation of these changes.

Students at the language school were members of the public as well as university students and staff. While there was a mix of ages and labour force status the level of education was generally very high. The focus of the language school was on learning the language (there were no formal qualifications to be gained). Prior to the survey computers were used to show video clips in class but there were no online resources available to students. Books and handouts were paper-based.

The research questions addressed by the survey were: how ready, in terms of their access, their competence, their confidence, and their motivation, were the students to use computer-based technologies for their language learning? Did age, gender and labour force status impact on technological readiness? Which kinds of applications, if any, were most suitable to community language settings?

The study was a non-experimental fixed design using a self-completion questionnaire.

Answers to the research questions should help others working with diverse learning groups to better understand students' needs in terms of technological support for their learning.

Theoretical background

Data on e-readiness have previously been collected through surveys with various research interests (for instance Ofcom or Eurostat statistics). In the context of language learning the Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA 2007/09) of the European Commission carried out a quantitative survey which collected data on ICT skills and internet use of language learners.
The EACEA study and this survey complement each other as both focussed on language learners and technology, but with very different approaches. While the EACEA targeted students with a particular interest in ICT, the participants of the current study were randomly selected students of the language school. Accordingly, the results from this survey give more general evidence on the e-readiness of community language students and also shed light on three subgroups based on age, gender and labour force status.

Previous research on age and e-readiness has reached conflicting outcomes. Numerous studies show that there are still considerable discrepancies in use of computers according to age, even though the gap is

decreasing (for instance Lenhart 2009, Ofcom 2010). Age has also been identified as a barrier for the use of technology for learning: In a study on generational gaps in Higher Education Garcia and Qin (2007) showed that the oldest age group (36 years and older) was generally less comfortable than younger students (21-25 years old) with technological learning tools and computer networks. The terms "digital native" and "digital immigrant" have often been used to distinguish between younger and older computer users (Prensky 2001).

However, this dichotomy has been criticised (for instance Bayne and Ross 2007) and recent research is introducing new terms. Prensky (2009) uses the concept of "digital wisdom" to show that digital development and engagement is not linked entirely to age. "Digital wisdom" describes the willingness to select and make use of technology according to individual needs. Stoerger (2009:34) proposes the metaphor of a "melting pot" as a "place where all individuals, including those with low levels of competency, experience technology in a way that fosters opportunities without barriers". The current study aims to identify whether age can be seen as a dividing factor in regard to e-readiness in the particular context of a community language school.

Gender-related differences in terms of e-readiness for language learning are also of interest in this paper. Gender differences have been investigated in regard to various aspects of computer use. Kennedy et al. (2003) have shown that women tend to use the internet for social reasons while men are more likely to use the computer for instrumental reasons and for their entertainment. Cooper (2006) has shown that parents and teachers often falsely attribute success and failure at computers to gender. This causes a high degree of computer anxiety and negative attitudes for girls.

However, research has shown evidence that the divide in computer skills between genders is likely to be a perception. Hargittai and Shafer (2006) tested web-use skills of men and women and showed that there was no great difference in their abilities, but that in a self-assessment test women rated their abilities significantly lower than those of men. The current survey will add to gender-related research by contributing data from community language students.

A low socio-economic background still acts as a barrier to computer access (see for instance OECD 2006, or Hohlfeld et al. 2008). Fox and Vitak (2008:1) confirm these findings in their research on the US population for the Pew Internet and American Life project: "Offline Americans are overwhelmingly over age 70, have less than a high school education, and speak a language other than English."

As the participants in this survey displayed a high level of education, the third subgroup this research focussed on was labour-force groups (rather than socio-economic groups) and their impact on e-readiness.

Survey background

Previous research (for instance Andersson 2004) has shown that multiple aspects need to be taken into account for measuring e-readiness and the current survey included questions on access, autonomy of use, competence, confidence, and motivation.

The Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technologies for Development (The Partnership), a key institution for compiling internationally reliable ICT statistics, developed a set of core ICT indicators in 2005 (Partnership 2005) which is reviewed regularly. The latest set of key indicators (The Partnership 2010) includes access to computers, autonomy of access, and digital skills. Questions around autonomy investigate whether participants use computers "from work or home, whether their use is monitored or unmonitored, and whether they must compete with other users for time online" (Di Maggio et al. 2001:31/32). Digital skills, or competence, are measured through questions on actual computer or internet use.

Questions for the current questionnaire on access, autonomy of use and competence were adapted from the ICT indicators of The Partnership (2010).

The topics 'confidence' and 'motivation' are not usually included in questionnaires on e-readiness. However, as the current research was intended to provide a strategy for the implementation of technology, confidence and motivation were perceived as very important. Previous research has shown that confidence (Partridge 2007) as well as motivation (Anderson 2004) are both predictors of successful computer use. In the questionnaire, confidence was measured by asking students about their confidence levels when using computer programmes to complete a list of tasks and, most importantly, by asking students about their confidence in learning new applications. Motivation was measured by asking students about their previous use of technology for language learning and about how interested they were in the future use of computer-based resources, or of distance learning, for their language learning.

The questionnaire consisted of six sections:

- Section 1: Uses of Internet Services (to measure actual skills)
- Section 2: Perceived Computer Skills (to measure confidence)
- Section 3: Access to Computers
- Section 4: Current Use of Technology for Language Learning
- Section 5: Attitudes Towards E-learning
- Section 6: Individual Characteristics and Language Learning Background

In order to reach a large number of students a self-completion questionnaire with closed and scale questions was chosen. Some open questions were included to receive more detailed opinions on selected topics. Drafts of the questionnaire were revised several times after discussions with management. The revised version was then tested on six people in order to ensure that all questions were clear, and in order to estimate the time it would take to fill in the questionnaire. A final revision took the comments of these people into account.

A total of 495 questionnaires were distributed by tutors at the language school. A paper, rather than an

online, format was chosen to reduce bias in the response towards those more comfortable with technology. A random distribution of participants was achieved by targeting every third course from the programme. An introductory text on the questionnaires informed students about the nature and purposes of the study, assuring them that participation was voluntary, information would be treated anonymously, and findings would be displayed in the main hall of the language school. For an optimal response rate students were encouraged to fill in the questionnaires during break time. However, if this was not convenient, students could take the questionnaires home and return them in the following week. Questionnaires were collected by tutors or could be returned in a box in the main hall.

356 questionnaires were completed by students and returned. The response rate was 72% and the questionnaire was answered by roughly 25% of all language students studying during the period of the survey. Findings were analysed with the help of SPSS.

Profile of participants

The majority of participants were female (63%). Ages ranged from 18-29 (45%), 30-40 (22%), 41-51 (9%), 52-62 (14%) and 63 and over (9%). All students held an equivalent of Scottish Higher Grades and most students either held or were studying towards an undergraduate degree, a post-graduate degree or a PhD. (There was no information about education from 4% of the participants.) Most respondents were paid employees (49%) or university students (24%). 12% were self-employed, 12% were not in the labour force, and 3% were unemployed or seeking a job.

71% of respondents visited classes during the evening and 29% attended daytime classes. 47% of participants were in their first year of language learning, 20% attended year 2, 12% were in year 3, and 9% were at an advanced level .

Students were learning French (15%), German (26%), Italian (13%), and Spanish (19%), and smaller numbers were studying Arabic, Gaelic, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese and Russian.

Respondents' main motivations for learning a language were: intellectual stimulation (64%), travel and tourism (62%), friends and family (43%), and business (20%). Multiple answers were possible.

Results of the analysis

General e-readiness

Access to computers

Questions regarding access to computers were presented as yes/no questions or as multiple choice questions. Table 1 shows that access to computers was only problematic for a very small number of participants, with most participants having complete autonomy of use.

Access to computers	%
Had used a computer in the past three months	99
Had a computer in their household	99
Had a computer for their exclusive use	82
Had a computer at home which was connected to the internet at broadband speed	94
Accessed the internet from their mobile	31
Accessed the internet daily	95

Table 1: Access to computers. Totals as % of 356 respondents.

Computer skills

This section gave evidence on students' actual competency by asking students about their use of internet services. Basic internet uses were very widespread: 99.7% of students had at least one email address and 97% sent at least one email per week (excluding work). However, Table 2 shows that findings were more mixed in regard to using the internet for social purposes other than emails, such as communicating via audio or video links, participating in social networking, or communicating via text-based chat. All of these activities could be of interest for collaborative forms of computer-assisted language learning.

Computer skills	%
Information seeking	99
Purchasing goods	98
Serious research	84
Managing bank account	77
Social networking (e.g. Facebook)	64
Text-based chat	45
Communication via audio or video links	66

Table 2: "Do you use the internet for...?". Totals as % of 356 responses

Confidence in computer skills

Participants were asked to answer a set of questions on how confident they felt performing various activities using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from "I feel very competent", to "I can only do this with help"; a fifth option was "I don't know / never tried this". Table 3 shows the percentage of students with high confidence (feeling "very" or "fairly" competent) and those who state they have never tried the activity. Confidence in more basic applications was widespread, however, the number of students who had never tried activities such as computer games or virtual worlds was remarkably high, given the potential benefit these applications could have for language learning (Wehner et al, 2011). Significantly, 66% showed confidence in learning new tools independently – this is arguably the most important factor for introducing technology to community classes if a wider range of applications is used.

Computer confidence	Students feeling "very" or "fairly" competent	Students who "don't know" / "never tried" the activitity
Creating a document	96	1
Navigating the web	96	0
Writing and receiving emails	98	0
Uploading a document or attaching a document to an email	94	2
Downloading movies, images, music, watching TV or video, or listening to radio or music	79	6
Playing computer games	43	39
Participating in an online asynchronous discussion	58	33
Participating in an online synchronous discussion	58	30
Creating presentations using PowerPoint or a similar software programme	75	12
Visiting a virtual world	13	72
Learning new tools and techniques independently	66	8

Table 3: Frequency analysis of confidence levels, totals as % of 356 responses

Motivation to use computers for language learning

Motivation of students to use computers for their language learning was investigated by asking students about their previous experience with computer-based learning, as well as about their interest in future provisions. 32% of all participants had already undertaken a formal course of learning which was delivered either entirely or partly online. Table 4 shows that even though many students had previously used computers for their own informal language learning, they had not explored all the language learning applications on offer.

Previous use of computers for language learning	%
Language learning through reading websites	66
Language learning through films and audios	60
Language learning through language learning websites	65
Language learning through online exercises	36
Language learning through emails	36
Language learning through chat-room interaction	8

Table 4: Previous use of technology for language learning. Totals as % of 356 respondents.

Table 5 shows that there was a high level of interest in the introduction of computer-aided resources as well as in blended learning (a mix of face-to-face and online tuition).

Interest in technology for language learning	% Not interested	% Quite interested	% Very interested
Introduction of computer-based resources	8	49	43
Introduction of blended learning	24	53	23

Table 5. Interest in technology. Totals as % of 356 respondents

Relationship between variables

Where differences by variables were tested for significance non-parametic tests were used. These were either Chi-square tests (for association) or Spearman's Rho (for correlation). For comparison of the means of ordinally structured data the Mann-Whitney U test was applied for two groups and the Kruskal-Wallis test for three or more groups (see for instance Robson, 2002, for a brief overview, or Bryman and Cramer, 2005, for a more comprehensive introduction to quantitative analyses using SPSS).

Access to computers and subgroups

Table 6 shows access factors where statistically significant differences by age ($p<0.05$, 2-tailed) were calculated. Older participants were less likely to own a computer exclusively and accessed the computer less frequently (though access was still very high).

Age / Access to computers	Correlation coefficient	18-29 year olds	63 and over
Exclusive ownership of computers	0.262	90%	67%
Access of internet by phone	0.171	39%	15%
Access of internet at least once a day	0.313	99%	79%

Table 6: Spearman's Rho correlation: Statistically significant differences in access to computers by 'age'; and frequencies by selected age groups

All indicators of access to computers by gender were tested using the Chi-square test. Only "accessing the internet by phone" showed a (weak) significant correlation ($p=0.072$, 2-tailed) with 37% of all male participants accessing the internet by phone compared to 27% of all females.

The analysis of access to computers by labour force status revealed similar results as the analysis by age. The Chi-square test was applied to a reduced set of four labour force groups ("unemployed" and "not in the labour force" were combined) and identified a significant difference ($p<0.05$, 2-tailed) between those owning a computer for their exclusive use and those sharing a computer (Chi-square = 24.56: 94% of students owned a computer for their exclusive use compared to only 65% of those not in the labour force / unemployed). A frequency analysis with all five labour force groups showed that those not in the labour force accessed the internet less often (though not statistically significantly) than members of the other groups (but 79% of those not in the labour force still accessed the internet at least once a day).

Competence and subgroups

None of the variables age, gender, or labour force status could be associated with the amount of email messages participants sent or received, or with the use of the internet to search for information. These services were used by a vast majority of participants across all subgroups.

The variable age has a statistically significant correlation ($p<0.05$ (2-tailed)) with the uses of internet services listed in Table 7.

Age / computer skills	Correlation Coefficient
Amount of email addresses	-0.387
Buying goods on the internet	0.168
Using the internet for serious research	0.424
Managing a bank account	0.309
Participating in social networking	0.650
Chatting	0.460
Communicating via audio or video links	0.374

Table 7: Spearman's Rho Correlation: Statistically significant differences in the use of internet services by 'age'

In all these cases older participants were less likely to engage in the activities. The most significant disparity occurred for "social networking by age": 90% of the age group 18-29 and 0% from the age group over 63 used this internet service.

The Chi-square test showed that the variable gender had no statistically significant association with any uses of internet services from the questionnaire.
In order to apply the Chi-square test to labour force groups, the groups "not in the labour force group" and "unemployed/ seeking a job" were collapsed into one group (ensuring that all cells had a minimum count of 5). Significant associations ($p<0.05$ (2-tailed)) were identified for the activities shown in Table 8.

Labour force groups / Computer skills	Pearson Chi-Square
Serious research	54.301
Managing a bank account	31.885
Social networking	71.923
Text-based chat	45.914
Communicating via audio or video links	36.182

Table 8: Chi-Square: Use of internet services by labour force group

A frequency analysis highlighted the spread of activities (note that the categories "not in the labour force" and "unemployed" were once more separated) and showed that those not in the labour force were least likely to participate in all of the above activities.

Confidence and subgroups

The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a significant degree of difference ($p<0.05$) between age and averages of all confidence scales (a raise in age predicted less confidence in computer skills).

The negative correlation was highest for "Participating in chats" (Chi-square = 124.22), "Navigating the web" (Chi-square = 78.67), "Participating in forums" (Chi-square = 75.16), "Creating presentations" (Chi-square = 58.18), and "Learning new tools" (Chi-square = 56.71).

In order to present a broader description of confidence levels according to age a "general computer skills index" was calculated by adding up all variables for perceived computer skills. All mentions of "very competent" received one point, "fairly competent" two points, etc. The highest possible score was 11 points and the weakest score 55.

A second "selected computer skills index" was then calculated excluding those skills to which a high proportion of participants had responded "I don't know / never tried this". The skills which were excluded from this second calculation were "computer games" (39% had never tried this), forums (33% never tried), chats (30% never tried), and virtual worlds (72% never tried). The best available score was now seven, the weakest 35. Table 9 shows the large discrepancies in computer confidence between the highest and lowest age groups measured by the skills indexes.

Age / Computer confidence	Means of general computer skills index	Means of selected computer skills index
18-29	20.3	9.3
30-40	22.4	10.3
41-51	26.9	11.9
52-62	30.2	13.4
63 and over	36.1	17.2

Table 9: Means of confidence in computer skills by age.

While there was no difference in the use of computer services between genders (see previous section) the Mann-Whitney test did reveal a significant degree of association ($p<0.05$; 2-tailed) between genders and perceived competency (or confidence) in a number of computer skills. Table 10 highlights the U-test followed by the perceived competency for men and women and the numbers of those who have never tried the task.

Labour force groups / Computer confidence	U	% of men feeling "very" or "fairly" competent	% of women feeling "very" or "fairly" competent	% of men who have "never tried this / don't know"	% of women who have "never tried this / don't know"
Playing computer games	10056.50	56	35	25	46
Participating in online forums	11606.50	40	21	24	37
Learning new tools	11417.50	76	60	7	9
Uploading documents	13024.50	89	79	2	2
Playing computer games	10056.50	56	35	25	46

Table 10: Mann-Whitney association of selected skills by Gender; and frequencies of perceived competency by gender

There was no significant gender difference in respect to other computer skills.

The mean average on the "general computer skills index" for men was 22.36; the mean average for women was 25.31, showing an average of three points difference between men and women.
The average score on the "selected computer skills index" was 10.4 for men and 11.4 for women, showing a much smaller gap of only one score. This shows that for the most widely used applications the perceived differences in skills by gender are relatively small. However, when all applications are taken together there are more activities that men are confident in than women.
The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a significant difference ($p<0.05$) between labour force groups and averages of all skills confidence levels. The "general computer skills index" and the "selected computer skills index" confirmed this: Students displayed the highest confidence at an average of 19.86 (general skills) or 9.04 (selected skills) while the confidence of those participants not in the labour force was lowest at an average of 34.70 (general skills) and 16.51 (selected skills).

Motivation to use computers for language learning and subgroups

The two questions on "interest in e-resources" and "interest in blended learning" were tested against the variables age, gender, labour force status, skills, time of courses, level of courses, language learning experience, and motivation for language learning.

a) Interest in e-resources

Although interest in e-resources was generally high, statistically significant correlations ($p<0.05$, 2-tailed) were identified for the following sub-groups:

- Age (Spearman's Rho = 0.112): The answer "not interested" was given by only 6% aged 18-29, but by 15% aged 52-62.
- Skills (Spearman's Rho = -0,185 for "General computer skills index"; and Spearman's Rho = -0.131 for "Selected computer skills index"): Students with higher levels of computer skills were more likely to be interested in e-resources.
- Previous experience with online or blended learning (Chi-square = 7.31): 53% of those with experience and 39% of those without experience were "very interested".
- Business as a motive for language learning (Chi-square = 9.69): No-one in this group was "not interested".

b) Interest in blended learning

Interest in blended learning (less face-to-face contact, more online learning) was also tested for correlation with the above named variables. Statistically significant correlations ($p<0.05$, 2-tailed) were identified for the following sub-groups:

Time of course (Chi-square = 6.57): 21% of evening students and 34% of daytime students were "not interested" in blended learning. Daytime courses were mostly frequented by students and those not in the labour force.

Skills (Spearman's Rho = -0.131 for "General computer skills index"; and Spearman's Rho = -0.149 for "Selected computer skills index"): Students with higher levels of computer skills were more likely to be

interested in blended learning.

Previous experience with online learning (Chi-square = 18.04): 37% of those with experience and 16% of those without experience were "very interested" in blended courses.

Discussion of findings

E-readiness

Access, competence and confidence

The level of computer access was generally very high, with 94% of survey participants accessing the computer at least once a day compared to 66% of the general UK population (Ofcom 2010) and 53% of the EU population (Eurostat 2009 and 2010) and 90% of the self-selected respondents of the EACEA. There was also a higher percentage of respondents with a varied set of skills (50%) than measured by Ofcom for the whole of the UK (25% in 2010) and Eurostat for the EU (25% in 2009). Ofcom and Eurostat use different indicators, but also differentiate between basic and more varied and sophisticated use of applications and programmes to investigate the level of skills.

While over 90% of survey respondents felt very or fairly competent in regard to more standard computer applications, less than 50% felt competent in regard to more specialised applications, such as forums, chats, computer games, and virtual worlds, with their actual use of services such as videos, Skype and social networking confirming this competency rate.

The fact that 66% of survey participants rated themselves "very" or "fairly" competent at learning new applications, but only 50% displayed a varied use of applications shows the high confidence of these learners. 66% of learners perceive themselves as ready to pick up the necessary skills for language learning if they are perceived as useful, even if they are not using similar skills at the moment. They can be described as "digitally wise computer users" (Prensky 2009). The high percentage of confidence towards gaining new skills amongst community language learners is perhaps not surprising given that these students are, per definition, lifelong learners.

These findings show that while community language classes are made up of a diverse body of students they by no means reflect the makeup of the general population in terms of access to computers, level of skills and confidence.

Motivation

Competence and confidence are linked closely to motivation. Partridge (2007) described outcome expectancy as playing a vital role in successful computer use and motivation. In regard to outcome expectancy the above findings show that the 66% of users who have high confidence levels can also be described as motivated computer users.

However, in this study it is important to distinguish between the motivation to use the computer generally and the motivation to use the computer for language learning. It was shown that a very high proportion of survey participants was interested in additional e-resources (92% "very" or "quite" interested) and blended learning (74% "very" or "quite" interested). These figures exceed the 66% of participants with high confidence levels in updating their computer skills and call for technical support when introducing technology to students. The findings for subgroups are discussed below and confirm the need for care in the selection of suitable applications for diverse groups.

Subgroups

Age

In respect to age, the findings from previous research were confirmed. The age of respondents had a significant impact on many aspects of e-readiness; however the contrast was not as strong as in some other surveys. The Ofcom Report (2010) showed that 37% of UK citizens aged 65 and over had internet access from home in 2010. In contrast, 94% of the current survey respondents aged 63 and over had a broadband connection at home, though only 65% had exclusive use of a computer.

The survey showed that older students (particularly those above 52) displayed a narrower use of the computer compared to younger age groups and were less likely to use internet banking or social networking, to chat or communicate via audio or video links. These findings corresponded with findings from the Ofcom report (2010).

Lenhart's research (2009) on participation in social networks by age is also confirmed, with 13% of survey participants aged 52-62 and 0% of participants over 63 having a Facebook account. Older respondents felt less competent at performing all computer-related activities including learning new tools.

The survey findings revealed a small age-related difference in the attitude towards the introduction of e-resources for language courses. However, 85% of students of higher age groups were motivated to use technology for the specific use of learning a language. Older students seemed to have stronger views on what they wanted to do with the computer. While they were not interested in certain applications, such as social networking, they were generally open to using the computer for specific tasks, such as language learning. This confirms the concept of technology as a melting-pot (Stoerger 2009). However, in order to successfully motivate older community language learners to use technology for their learning it will be important to use applications which are perceived as useful.

Gender

Hargittai and Shafer (2006) had described a difference in confidence between the genders which is not reflected in actual competency. This was confirmed by the current results where there was no difference between the genders in their use of the computer (apart from gaming, forums and virtual worlds). Nevertheless, men showed more confidence by rating their competence higher in all activities (as seen in the general computer skills index). Even the selected computer skills index showed a slightly higher average for men than for women. There was a considerable contrast in the response to the question on "learning new tools" where 76% of all men and 60% of all women rated themselves "very" or "fairly" competent. As shown above, this figure could be of great importance in respect to motivation. However, there was no difference between genders in the interest in e-resources for learning. These findings suggest that new applications should be explained and demonstrated thoroughly to ensure that all participants are confident in using the tools.

Labour force status

Table 11 shows that all labour force groups of the survey were extremely e-ready compared to the general statistics across the UK.

Labour force groups / Frequency of internet access	Students	Paid employees	Self-employed	Unemployed / seeking a job	Retired / not in the labour force
Eurostat (2010): UK citizens using the internet at least once a **week**	95%	88%		76%	53%
Survey participants using the internet at least once a **day**	99%	97%	98%	92%	79%

Table 11: Comparison: Frequency of internet access by labour force status

Once more, these figures show that survey participants across all sub-groups were well prepared to use computers for their learning.

Summary of findings and implications for the use of technology

This survey presented a valid representation of the language school with:

- 25% of all students taking part;
- a random selection of students;
- a high response rate of 72%;
- a high number of respondents (N=356).

The findings from the survey showed that students at the language school were extremely e-ready in regard to access, competence, confidence, and motivation to use technology for their learning. E-readiness of these students was far above average for the UK population.

However, there were some disparities in the pattern of computer use, (perceived) computer skills, and motivation which could be related to age, gender and labour force status.

Older age groups and retired students demonstrated less confidence, used the computer and the internet less broadly, and had less autonomy of use than younger students. They were significantly less likely than other age groups to engage in applications which could be used for collaborative learning, such as social networking, chatting, visiting forums or virtual worlds, gaming, and communicating via audio or video links. They also had less confidence in updating computing skills.

Female students displayed less confidence than male students, particularly in regard to learning new computing skills. However, there was hardly any difference in their actual use of computers and their current skills.

This study has the following implications for the introduction of more technology:

Pilot courses with blended learning would be of particular interest to students with high levels of computer skills, students of evening classes, and students with business as their main motivation for language learning.

E-resources for general courses are very welcome given the high levels of e–readiness and interest amongst language students. However, consideration should be given to the type of resources offered. Access to self-directed learning should be introduced as a priority. Foreign language sites, dictionaries and online exercises are already being used by many language learners, and platforms with links to similar sites would be most easily accepted and accessible to all. A considerable number of community language learners had no experience with other forms of self-directed learning, such as links to audios and videos, and would benefit from being familiarised with technical issues in class.

Introducing computer-based forms of collaborative learning might meet with some barriers, as a large number of students had never tried or were not interested in computer games, chats, forums, and virtual worlds (particularly members of older age groups, women, retired people). Given the inclusive nature of community language courses it is advised to be cautious with the introduction of these applications. However, collaborative and game-based learning has been described as motivating and beneficial (for instance EACEA Annexe 3, p.96.) and such applications could be offered as voluntary extras. Again, care would need to be taken to introduce these applications in class in order to raise confidence in these tools. It should not be forgotten that the range of skills of around 50% of participants was narrow and, in some subgroups, confidence was low.

However, community language learning must make more use of computer-assisted language learning in order not to fall behind with developments in language teaching. Language learning textbooks are

increasingly making use of the internet, and teachers and learners cannot ignore this. Furthermore, given that technology is penetrating all sections of learning, students will increasingly expect more engagement with technology in language classes.

Teachers will play a vital role in the use of technology for community language teaching and further research should address attitudes of teachers towards the introduction of more technology.

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Community language learning

Community language learning (**CLL**) is Language-teaching method[1] in which students work together to develop what aspects of a language they would like to learn. It is based on the *Counseling-approach* in which the teacher acts as a counsellor and a paraphraser, while the learner is seen as a client and collaborator.

The CLL emphasizes the sense of community in the learning group, it encourages interaction as a vehicle of learning, and it considers as a priority the students' feelings and the recognition of struggles in language acquisition. There is no syllabus or textbook to follow and it is the students themselves who determine the content of the lesson by means of meaningful conversations in which they discuss real messages. Notably, it incorporates translation, transcription, and recording techniques.

Background

The CLL approach was developed by Charles Arthur Curran, a Jesuit priest,[2] professor of psychology at Loyola University Chicago, and counseling specialist.[3] This method refers to two roles: that of the know-er (teacher) and student (learner). Also the method draws on the counseling metaphor and refers to these respective roles as a counselor and a client. According to Curran, a counselor helps a client understand his or her own problems better by 'capturing the essence of the clients concern ...[and] relating [the client's] affect to cognition...;' in effect, understanding the client and responding in a detached yet considerate manner.

To restate, the counselor blends what the client feels and what he is learning in order to make the experience a meaningful one. Often, this supportive role requires greater energy expenditure than an 'average' teacher.[4]

Methods

Natural Approach

The foreign language learner's tasks, according to CLL are (1) to apprehend the sound system of the language (2) assign fundamental meanings to individual lexical units and (3) construct a basic grammar.

In these three steps, the CLL resembles the Natural Approach to language teaching in which a learner is not expected to speak until he has achieved some basic level of comprehension.[5]

There are 5 stages of development in this method.

1. "Birth" stage: feeling of security and belonging are established.
2. As the learners' ability improve, they achieve a measure of independence from the parent.
3. Learners can speak independently.
4. The learners are secure enough to take criticism and being corrected.
5. The child becomes an adult and becomes the know-er.

Online Communities

These types of communities have recently arisen with the explosion of educational resources for language learning on the Web. A new wave of Community Learning Languages have come into place with the internet growth and the boom of social networking technologies. These online CLLs are social network services such as Papora (language education company), English, baby! and LiveMocha that take advantage of the Web 2.0 concept of information sharing and collaboration tools, for which users can help other users to learn languages by direct communication or mutual correction of proposed exercises.

Barriers in Community Language Learning

When learning a different language while in a multilingual community, there are certain barriers that one definitely will encounter. The reason for these barriers is that in language learning while in a multicultural community, native and nonnative groups will think, act, and write in different ways based on each of their own cultural norms. Research shows that students in multicultural environments communicate less with those not familiar with their culture. Long-term problems include that the foreign speakers will have their own terms of expression combined into the language native to the area, which often makes for awkward sentences to a native speaker. Native students tend to develop an exclusive attitude toward the nonnative speaker because they feel threatened when they do not understand the foreign language. Short-term problems include the fact that native students will usually lack in-depth knowledge of the nonnative cultures, which makes them more likely to be unwilling to communicate with the foreign speakers. Because these foreign students grew up and were educated in a totally different cultural environment, their ideologies, identities and logic that form in the early age cause different ways of expressing ideas both in written and spoken form. They will have to modify and redefine their original identities when they enter a multicultural environment (Shen, 459). This is no easy task. Consequentially, a low-level of social involvement and enculturation will occur for both native and nonnative speakers in the community.

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