

# *Individual English Learning Based on Internet Resources*

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**Abstract**—The development of computer and net technology contributes significantly to the rich resources on Internet, which provides tremendous room for individual English learning. This paper presents the needs for individual English learning as well as its tendency, introduces some ways of individual English learning with the help of Internet resources, and discusses the role of teachers in individual learning based on internet resources.

**Keywords**—Internet resources; English learning; individual learning

## I. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPUTER AND NET TECHNOLOGY CREATES ENVIRONMENT FOR INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH LEARNING

CAI (Computer Aided Instruction) is one of the important application fields of computer, in which CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) has attracted people's attention and becomes a new learning model in language learning [1]. English teaching experts throughout the world believe that the abundant resources on Internet, such as English teaching web sites, Internet forum and electronic journals, will definitely enrich English teaching contents, supplement teaching means, and then improve teaching effects.

Internet, being a form-free, bound-free, and time-free message transmitting net linked by millions of computers on the globe, has become the largest information resource store in human history. People are using this new medium in ways that simply was not possible a decade ago[2]. Nowadays, the number of personal computers in the world is climbing up at an unbelievable speed, and access to computer and Internet is becoming a common phenomenon in non-English-speaking countries, especially in China. All these macro environments make more practical the development of individual learning whose contents and progress can be controlled by the learner himself. Thanks to the English-language-based global information connecting, individual English learning is encouraged and propelled, and has become a new tendency of English learning.

## II. THE NEEDS FOR INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH LEARNING

In traditional English teaching, teachers explain in a broadcasting way and students listen passively; students' learning interests and potentials are hard to evoke because of the lack of mutual communication. In addition, "uniform" teaching has another disadvantage: the teacher is facing all the

students in the class, using the same method to the students of various learning styles. Such kind of learning cannot meet the needs of individual learning and consequently, the knowledge taken in is limited.

There is no doubt that CAI has come into English teaching class; however, we have to admit that many language teaching course-wares just have the function of presenting the knowledge the teacher is going to introduce. This statement is proved by a questionnaire[3]. In other words, they work for teachers but ignore students' position of being cognitive subject. These course-wares usually lack mutual training designed for students and can hardly meet the needs of individual learning.

Educational individualism theory points out that a person is an individual of different characters and different needs from others. Learners vary in cognitive means, learning styles, learning needs, and learning potentials. Therefore, it is necessary to guide learners with different learning contents and individual-oriented teaching means.

According to some psychologists[4], a person's learning and maturity is a process interacted by intelligent and non-intelligent factors. At present, in China, schooling education attaches much importance to developing students' such intelligent factors as mental ability and memorial ability. The "wholesale" teaching style to large class ignores the cultivation of students' non-intelligent components—individual learning motivation, affection and temperament. The uniform textbooks cannot reveal the diversity and fun of learning contents; the uniform progress cannot allow students to choose individually; the large number of students and short class hours limit students' participation; uniform assignments and texts are negative for students' creativity.

As a matter of fact, non-intelligent factors play an essential role in one's learning achievement and personal development. Only the environment of diversity, interest, participation, creativity and autonomy can meet the requirements of developing non-intelligent abilities. The application of computer provides learners with individual language learning methods; the rich Internet resources present more contents for individual learning; the intercommunication between a learner and a computer gives the learner feedback soon so as to adjust his objection and learning progress. In a word, the situation in which students passively accept knowledge under teachers' control will be greatly changed.

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### III. ABUNDANT INTERNET ENGLISH LEARNING RESOURCES

The abundant learning resources on Internet and various tool software make it more practical for individuals to use suitable ways and contents to control their own learning. Resources on the Internet are limitless and of great variety. Many international and domestic websites are devoted to providing English learning resources for learners. There are websites of English listening, grammar, writing, English tests, vocabulary and background knowledge. There are also websites of online dictionary and library, English games, stories, films, electronic journals and magazines, making penpals, etc. These websites create real and mutual learning environment for learners by means of words, pictures and sound.

Compared with other means of English learning, learning via Internet has many advantages: firstly, information on Internet is abundant, which can be regarded as an information ocean; secondly, learner and Internet are reciprocal, for learners can get feedback in seconds; thirdly, knowledge on Internet is updated, since Internet is the best and the quickest medium for knowledge to be known; lastly, learning via Internet is interesting, and the learner can be impressed not only by words but also by sound, colors and even by animations.

### IV. THE WAYS OF INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH LEARNING VIA INTERNET

There are numerous ways of individual English learning methods as there are limitless resources on the Internet. There is a plethora of online resources available to students which can help in learning English online including online tests, exercises and helpful videos.

In general, the following ways are popular and suitable for individual English learners:

#### A. Visiting English learning websites

Many websites aims specially to provide information and materials for English learning in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, testing, and background knowledge, etc. These materials including words and sound can be downloaded. If a learner wants to obtain more information, he can use search engines such as “yahoo” and “google” by typing key words like “TESL”, “ESL”, “TEFL”, “EFL”, or “English learning”, “English study” and “distance learning”.

#### B. Taking part in online newsgroups

By taking part in online newsgroups, learners can exchange experience and put up questions in the process of English learning. They may read the questions on the line, give comments or reply by sending email to the group. The enquiries and questions usually will be answered soon.

Many websites provide Blogs, news sites and video resources, which are helpful to improve English reading skills, vocabulary and grammar greatly. All he needs to do is keeping up with the latest news in English. In addition, he can also learn more about English culture!

#### C. Taking part in English learning discussion groups

Taking part in discussion group is similar to that in news group; however, since this method is mainly dependent on emails, the disadvantage is that feedback sometimes is late. The advantage of this means is that the discussion groups are characteristic of the fine specialization in English learning: there are discussion groups for intensive English reading, scientific English, English writing, English films, and so on.

#### D. Taking part in BBS

BBS is like a huge bulletin board on which everything concerning English learning can be put up. Usually feedback can be obtained quickly.

This is a great place to keep up with news from a specific field; a learner can also find many interesting posts related to studying English and England in general!



Fig. 1. Cyber communication

#### E. Making foreign online penpals

Internet shortens the distance between two persons in different continents. With the help of emails, an English learner can communicate with a foreign penpal to exchange information and have his English level improved. There are many websites for making penpals. On such a website, a learner can read the inviting applications, choose a penpal, and respond to an invitation by sending an email.

#### F. Subscribing free-charge English-learning online magazines

There are many free-charge English-learning magazines on the Internet, and learners may receive periodically emails related to English learning. For example, some subscriptions are free and will send every week emails concerning English vocabulary, phrases and grammar; some other websites will deliver emails everyday to explain the origin or history of a word or an expression.

#### G. Getting into online chat room

Log onto a website, fill in some forms, and then you can get into a chat room. You can either “talk” by typing words or signals or talk in a real way via a microphone. As the name “chat room” is implied, learners online feel at ease and talk informally. They prefer to use sound-similar letters or abbreviations to substitute for formal words, for example, “r u 2 OK?” means “Are you two all right?”. Learners feel friendly to talk with each other and they think it is the best way to master colloquial English.

H. Using online English learning dictionaries

Firstly, standard dictionaries are highly recommended. Merriam-Webster, Cambridge, and Oxford all have online dictionaries for English learners. They usually follow the normal dictionary formats and layout. It is advisable that while initially using an online dictionary, learners listen to the pronunciation of a word that is completely fresh to him.

Secondly, there are also a number of picture or visual dictionaries available online. Two that could be used for beginners are ESOL Help and the English Picture Dictionary. Additionally, some dictionaries have entries containing more colloquial and idiomatic speech.

Online dictionaries are usually user-friendly. They explain with very simple, easy-to-understand language.

V. TEACHER’S ROLE IN INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH LEARNING

With the development of CALL, Internet provides more learning resources than teachers do. The teaching model of one teacher, one textbook and several reference book is going out of fashion<sup>[4]</sup>. Teachers are facing challenges now—they are supposed to renew the traditional notion, update their knowledge, and learn while teaching.

In Internet environment, a teacher is no longer a knowledge teller, neither a master in teaching activities. Instead, learner is the controller of his own study.

A teacher in this situation is a designer for using Internet resources, a guide for setting learning objects for learners and a facilitator to create learning environment, choose suitable materials and organize activities<sup>[5]</sup>.

A teacher in this situation is in cooperative partnership with learners; he is a coordinator in the learning group. He should respect students’ individual needs and not impose his own ideas on them. He should be devoted to developing students abilities to acquire information, analyze problem and make judgments.

A teacher in this situation should not only give evaluations for learners’ learning activities but also should teach them how to organize, control, supervise and evaluate themselves, so that learners will be ready to learn independently.

Although a teacher no longer works in form of transmitting knowledge directly to students, he is more important than ever before because he plays a role of guiding in life learning.

VI. IMPROVE ENGLISH SKILLS BY USING INTERNET RESOURCES

A. Improve English by Listening

There are two ways for a learner to approach using the Internet to improve his English. He can either join English language lessons, or learn by surrounding himself with as many examples of English as possible<sup>[6]</sup>. In order to improve his English by listening, he can look for podcasts and other audio material. If he is not looking for lessons but wants to listen to people speak English, there are plenty of online radio

stations where he can listen to the language as it’s being used by native speakers.

B. Improve English by Reading

The real fun starts when a learner goes out on the web and starts reading the news in English, starts following blogs that cater to his interests, and starts reading ebooks in English. He can find free public domain ebooks on some websites. He might also make a point to read some digital newspapers.

C. Improve English by Writing

If a learner wants to improve his English skills by writing, and he wants the Internet to help him, tools like Grammarly can be invaluable to him. It is a useful word processor that has spelling checkers and gives the learner grammar improvement suggestions and explanations.

D. Improve English by Speaking

Some websites, like MyLanguageExchange.com, are devoted to connect people who want to practice newly learned languages with native speakers. It helps to find people a learner can exchange emails with, text chat, or speak over mobile phone. The true power of the Internet is in allowing people to connect, so when a learner plans to find a person to talk to and improve his English, the Internet will provide.

VII. CONCLUSION

In future English teaching, learners can directly find materials from Internet which provides a real communicative language learning environment<sup>[7]</sup>. With the easy access to Internet, a learner can sit down before a computer and enter such an environment to acquire English language. This method is far more natural and beneficial than teachers’ setting up artificial situations in the past.

Individual English learning will be realized by utilizing the resources on the Internet; and therefore, learners’ learning means will be basically changed. Learners will choose learning contents and adjust learning strategies according to their own interest and needs. Learners will become real controllers of their own study by making good use of Internet resources<sup>[8]</sup>. In short, Internet provides rich English learning resources for EFL learners as is shown in the following figure.

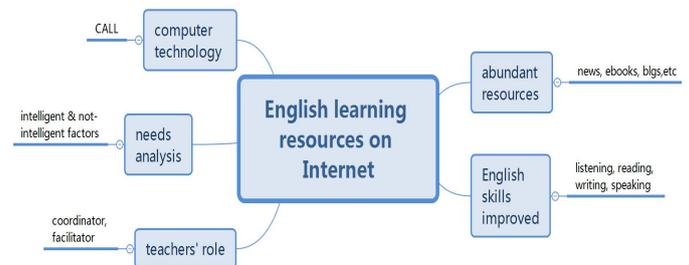


Fig. 2. English learning resources on Internet

New up-to-the date resources are coming out like cell phone APPs and Internet VR language learning games.

Therefore, it is critical for EFL learners to make good use of the resources in order to maximize the learning efficacy.

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