Will the use of IT arouse students’ interests in learning English?

Introduction:
In Hong Kong, crowded teachers and students timetable have been an obstruction to working closer with students having difficulty. Not all students learn at the same pace even though they are separated in classes according to their learning abilities. Thus, there are always two questions in my mind: What am I concerned about?/ What do I want to improve? There are many ways that we can improve ourselves. Action research is one of those. Beverly (1993) stated that action research assists practitioners in identifying the needs, assessing the development processes, and evaluating the outcomes of the changes they define, design, and implement. Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) suggested 4 fundamental components of action research: (1) developing a plan for improvement, (2) implementing the plan, (3) observing and documenting the effects of the plan, and (4) reflecting on the effects of the plan for further planning and informed action.

The plan
The first step of the action research is to explore an issue in teaching or learning. A group of 1C students was chosen to carry out the research. English seems always to be problem of students. Some of them are not interested in it and regard English is a boring subject. So, the problem statement of the research is ‘Students lacking intention in learning English.’ In order to solve this problem, a research question is developed, ‘Will the use of IT arouse students’ interests in learning English?’

Action
The research was carried our from April to May 2004. I tried to use more IT in teaching English to see whether they would be more interested in learning English or
not. During the double lessons, I spent one period in the MMLC with them. Instead of chalk and talk, I used PowerPoint to present grammar items. Also, I encouraged them to write e-cards on the web as a piece of writing rather than did it in the exercise book. Furthermore, some interactive games of English were introduced so that they could learn independently.

Observation

During the several weeks of research, I found that most students were more interested in learning English through using IT. PowerPoint game them sound and visual stimulations. Students were more concentrated in the lessons. Besides, they were more confident and interested in writing English, especially those who were shy and afraid of writing English. They could choose pictures, animations, and sound to make an e-card which was different to the traditional way of writing. Lastly, the introduction of the interactive games let students learn more actively and independently.

Reflection

Although IT could help students a lot in learning English, there are still some limitations. From my observation, a few students could not adopt reading PowerPoint. These students were a bit slower that the rest of the class. They could not follow the progress. Also, the temptation of computer is another problem. Some students might not do what the teacher told them to do. They would ‘surf’ on the net and played their own games. It is not easy for a teacher to monitor all students at them same time. Besides, students would not pay as much attention as they were in the normal classroom. Thus, teachers needed to spend more time on explaining and teaching.
**Conclusion and Re-plan**

Lewin’s approach of action involves a spiral of steps and each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and finding about the result of the action. The final step of action research is to modify the original plan after the reflection. In the above case, I would make a note sheet or worksheet for students before they go to the MMLC in order to help those who cannot the PowerPoint. Also, I can print out the PowerPoint slice as note for students. Furthermore, I can give more clear instructions so that students know exactly what they should do in the computer room.

Action research is a cycle. Leaders for change can become learners as well when they engage in research. As a result, they become less vulnerable to and less dependent on external answers to the challenges they face (Fullan, 2000). To respond to the challenges in the Hong Kong education, teachers can reflect upon themselves by carrying out action research in their teaching lives.
References:

