

Title of project: The effectiveness of computer-based materials as a means of teaching the English article system

Type of grant application: Doctoral Dissertation Grant

Applicant: Mrs Fei-Yu Chuang

Supervisor: Dr Hilary Nesi

Which TIRF priority the current proposal is responding to:

This proposal is responding to current (2004-05) TIRF priority: “The demonstrable effects of the use of computer-based technology on students’ learning of English as a second or foreign language”.



Fei-Yu Chuang

Project Summary

This proposal is made at the start of the final phase of my doctoral research. In the first phase I investigated the academic writing component of a pre-undergraduate ESL programme, and compiled and analysed a corpus of 50 essays (88000 words) produced by Chinese participants. Analysis of this corpus revealed that they were failing to handle the English article system effectively; article misuse was the most frequent cause of error in their writing. Analysis of their study context, however, revealed that the article system received little or no attention during class time, and was also given low priority in the available ELT textbooks and self-study grammar materials.

In the second phase of my research I investigated methods of teaching and learning the article system, and devised and piloted some computer-based activities focussing on article use in academic text. In the final phase I intend to refine these materials and investigate their effect on the written accuracy of Chinese learners of English.

The study draws on four research areas: SLA theory, grammar teaching methodologies, CALL methodologies and Human-Computer Interface design. My materials use authentic academic texts produced by both learners and proficient student writers, and are intended to help learners notice the correct form-function mapping of article use so that this can be integrated into their own linguistic systems. I will evaluate the materials iteratively, using observations and user walk-throughs, and calculate their effect using both a pretest-immediate posttest-delayed posttest model and comparisons of the writing of current and previous cohorts.