

Research Paper—Computer Science



Feb, 2010

A Paradigmatic Shift of Traditional Language Learning to Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)



*Mrs. Chitra Joshi

*Lecturer, Indore Institute of Science and Technology, Indore

ABSTRACT

In the era of computers; it has become an essential element of learning and its importance cannot be neglected. Computer assisted learning techniques have enhanced the knowledge levels of students as well as teachers. Computer-assisted Language Learning is a continuing challenge that requires time and commitment. As we approach the 21st century, what really matters is how we use technology. Computers can/will never substitute teachers but they offer new opportunities for better language practice. They may actually make the process of language learning significantly richer and play a key role in the reform of a country's educational system. The next generation of students will feel a lot more confident with information technology than we do. As a result, they will also be able to use the Internet to communicate more effectively, practice language skills more thoroughly and solve language learning problems more easily.

Introduction: Computer Assisted Language Learning or Call's origin and development trace; dates back to the 1960's (Delcloque 2000). Since the early days CALL has developed into a symbiotic relationship between the development of technology and pedagogy. Many teachers who have never touched a computer tend to respond with an emphatic no; whereas, the overwhelming number of teachers who give computers a try find that they are indeed useful in second language learning. No doubt, computers make excellent teaching tools, especially in teaching languages in any aspect, be it vocabulary, grammar, composition, pronunciation, or other linguistic and pragmatic-communicative skills. The

development of the Internet brought about a revolution in the teachers' perspective, as the teaching tools offered through the Internet were gradually becoming more reliable. It is basically a form of computer-based assisted learning which carries two important features: bidirectional learning and individualized learning. CALL materials are tools for learning. The focus of CALL is learning, and not teaching. CALL materials are used in teaching to facilitate the language learning process. It is a student-centered accelerated learning material, which promotes self-paced accelerated learning.

E-learning model The model illustrates the two major interactors, learners and teachers, and

their interactions with each other and with content. Learners can of course interact directly with content that they find in multiple formats, and especially on the Web; however, many choose to have their learning sequenced, directed, and evaluated with the assistance of a teacher. This interaction can take place within a community of inquiry, using a variety of Net-based synchronous and asynchronous activities (video, audio, computer conferencing, chats, or virtual world interaction). These environments are particularly rich, and allow for the learning of social skills, the collaborative learning of content, and the development of personal relationships among participants. However, the community binds learners in time, forcing regular sessions or at least group-paced learning. Community models are also, generally, more

expensive, as they suffer from an inability to scale to large numbers of learners. The second model of learning (on the right) illustrates the structured learning tools associated with independent computer assisted learning. Common tools used in this mode include computer-assisted tutorials, drills, and simulations. Virtual labs, in which students complete simulations of lab experiments, and sophisticated search and retrieval tools are also becoming common instruments for individual learning. Printed texts (now often distributed and read online) have long been used to convey teacher interpretations and insights in independent study. However, it should also be emphasized that, although engaged in independent study, the student

is not alone. Often colleagues in the work place, peers located locally (or distributed, perhaps across the Net), and family members have been shown to be significant sources of support and assistance to independent study learners (Potter, 1998).

Role Changes for Teachers and Students

The teachers role now is not only that of handing down knowledge to students and being the center of students' attention, they become guides as they construct the activities students are to do and help them as students complete the assigned tasks. In other words, instead of being directly involved in students' construction of the language, the teacher interacts with students primarily to facilitate difficulties in using the target language (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) that arise when interacting

with the computer and/or other people. Elimination of a strong teacher presence has been shown to lead to larger quantity and better quality of communication such as more fluidity, more use of complex sentences and more sharing of students' personal selves. However, teacher presence is still very important to conduct review sessions to reinforce what was learned. On the other hand rather than passively absorbing information, learners negotiate meaning and assimilate new information through interaction and collaboration with someone other than the teacher, be that person a classmate or someone outside of the classroom entirely. Learners also learn to interpret new information and experiences on their



own terms because the use of technology redistributes teachers' and classmates' attentions, less-able students can become more active participants in the class because class interaction is not limited to that directed by the teacher. Moreover more shy students can feel free in their own students'-centered environment. This will raise their self-esteem and their knowledge will be improving. If students are performing collaborative project they will do their best to perform it within set time limits.

COMPUTER STUDENT TEACHER

Use of Call for the development of Four Skills A number of studies have been done concerning how the use of CALL affects the development of language learners' four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Most report's significant gains in reading and listening and most CALL programs are geared toward these receptive skills because of the current state of computer technology. However, most reading and listening software is based on drills. Gains in writing skills have not been as impressive as computers cannot assess this well. Using current CALL technology, even with it current limitations, for the development of speaking abilities has gained much attention.

There has been some success in using CALL, in particular computer-mediated communication, to help speaking skills closely linked to "communicative competence" (ability to engage in meaningful conversation in the target language) and provide controlled interactive speaking practice outside the classroom. Using chat has been shown to help students routinize certain often-used expressions to promote the development of automatic structure that help develop speaking skills. This is true even if the chat is purely textual. The use of videoconferencing gives not only immediacy when communicating with a real person but also

visual cues, such as facial expressions, making such communication more authentic.

Advantages of Using Call Techniques

Interest and Motivation CALL programmes are automatic guided lessons. They teach the language in different and more interesting, attractive ways and present language through games, animated graphics and problem-solving techniques.

Individualization Many students need additional time and individualized practice to meet learning objectives. The computer offers students self-instructional tasks that let them master prerequisite skills and course objectives at a speed and level dictated by their own needs.

Optimal Use of Learning Time Computer helps students to use their Academic Learning Time (ALT) more fruitfully. It is the amount of time a student spends attending to relevant academic tasks while performing those tasks with a high rate of success.

Immediate Feedback Learners receive maximum benefit from feedback; the computer gives instantaneous feedback and help the learner ward off his misconception at the initial stage itself.

Critical Thinking Skills: Computer technology in classrooms helps in improving self-concept and mastery of basic skills, more student-centered learning and engagement in the learning process, more active processing resulting in higher-order thinking skills and better recall.

Conclusion The present status of higher education has now changed with the addition of language laboratories where a student is motivated to use CALL software for the language development. Especially in case of English as a second language where there is actually learning and not the process of acquisition. The software consists of exercises and information along with graphical data which stimulates the language

learning at both content and intellect level. An ideal CALL courseware remains not an alternative but a complementary tool in reinforcing classroom activities. The effectiveness of CALL depends on the teacher's readiness to adopt new attitudes and approaches toward language teaching. The teacher should avoid being skeptical about the use of computer in language teaching and begin to re-evaluate his methods in the light of computer's tremendous teaching potential and boldly address

to the challenges offered. The computer can best assist teachers if it is seen not as a replacement for their work but as a supplement to it. The computer will not replace the language teachers, but when used creatively, it will relieve them of tedious tasks and will enable students to receive individualized attention from both teachers and machines to a degree that has hitherto been impossible.

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