Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL): A Strategy for Developing English Proficiency at the Tertiary Level

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Abstract

In the field of education, computers have become intriguing technological tools. The importance of computers as teaching tools in classrooms cannot be overstated when it comes to language acquisition. Using computers for language learning can also help tertiary-level and technology students strengthen their study abilities.This article highlights the pivotal role of computers as indispensable teaching tools in modern classrooms, particularly in the realm of language acquisition. The article highlights the multifaceted benefits of utilizing computers to enhance study abilities, emphasizing their significance in shaping a comprehensive and effective educational experience.

Key words: computer technology, language acquisition, tertiary education, tertiary students, study skills.

Introduction

Each learner is unique, with varying requirements and capacities for language acquisition. Language learners were viewed as passive absorbers of knowledge, while teachers were perceived as transmitters of that knowledge in traditional methods of instruction. The emphasis in the classroom moved from the teacher to the student with the introduction of the communicative style of language instruction. In the subject of English language teaching, current trends centre on learner autonomy, learner involvement, learner-generated curricula, fostering a comfortable learning environment, and training related to need-based learning. Consequently, the notion of customized education is becoming more and more significant.

Study skills are essentially the ability to obtain information on any topic from reliable sources. A learner's primary information sources are: a) books; b) lectures in class; and c) the general public. To remember and retrieve the information as needed, learners must internalize it as effectively as possible from these sources.

Regarding school students, they primarily rely on reading textbooks and listening to teachers explain the textbook's contexts while gathering information from various sources. School students mostly rely on reading textbooks and listening to teachers describe their contents to identify the source of knowledge and comprehend the methods by which the source of information is obtained. It is anticipated that as they transition from school to college, their knowledge base will grow. When attending lectures in the classroom, it is expected of them to take notes. In addition, they should study multiple books on a specific topic and absorb the knowledge they provide. They should also look for information from other sources. This calls for effective reading techniques. Students must arrange this data and present it in their projects, exams, and assignments.

However, higher-level schools do a poor job of instructing students in study skills; instead, they force them to absorb large amounts of material quickly. They have a sense of unease as a result of their incapacity to process the information they are exposed to in a variety of disciplines.They become diffident as a result of their uneasiness and turn to "memorization" without fully understanding it. Such cramming results in random and fleeting knowledge acquisition. It is necessary to learn how to take notes in the classroom rather than memorize lengthy books. Because class lectures undoubtedly cover more ground than "handouts" ever could. Even while the first two semesters of the first year of the college curriculum involve reading, summarizing, writing paragraphs, and knowledge transfer skills, these skills are limited to English classes and do not extend to the study of other key disciplines.

The Computer Assisted Language Learning Approach

The Computer Assisted Language Learning approach is an efficient way to build study abilities, especially those connected to receptive skills, in this cyber age where the majority of academic activities are computer-directed.

Speaking of computers with the acquisition of second language abilities, it is stated that, among the four language learning skills, CALL programs can primarily target the receptive skills of reading and listening. Therefore, the CALL technique can also be used to build study skills that are under the category of receptive skills.

The computer envisions a crucial role for the teacher while employing CALL resources in a language school. Despite not having direct control over the learning process, teachers can offer exceptional backup or assistance by integrating technology into their lessons. This allows them to monitor students' language performance and growth without having to intervene personally.Any CALL learning resource can be adopted or modified by teachers to meet the requirements and proficiency levels of their students. With the use of the CALL resources, students are free to choose and implement the learning technique that best fits their learning preferences. This will help to speed up the learning process. Research indicates that CALL resources encourage students to learn more effectively and offer a stress-free atmosphere.

An Insight into the Study Skills

A broad phrase that includes a wide range of characteristics, "study skills" is linked to personal development, including attitudes and behaviours.Study skills are those that are obtained to advance professionally or for personal growth. Academically speaking, some study skills include trying out new learning approaches, making connections with other students, learning how to communicate, being able to pay attention during lectures, reading a book taking notes, and taking part in class activities.Teaching these abilities with an emphasis on personal or academic progress for each student is the main goal. Academic achievement is primarily based on a combination of diligent labour, focused study, and developing critical thinking skills. Since time is of the essence, time management is a study skill as well.

Study skills also include writing academic papers, participating in discussions, presenting papers, taking notes from lectures and books, conducting basic research, using computer or library resources, managing study time, and getting ready for tests.Promoting creativity among students and valuing their inventiveness inspires them to achieve excellence in their endeavours. Instructing them on project planning fosters accountability, and assisting them in project management fosters responsibility. By emphasizing these various study skills, students' communication abilities can also be improved through the use of CALL.

Note-taking

Another study skill that kids must inevitably acquire is taking notes. According to Michael J. Wallace (1998), there are often three main instances where notes are taken while listening.Notes are taken mostly on three occasions. Michael J. Wallace (1998) lists them as follows:

a. making notes as you listen.

b. to make notes as you read.

c. jotting down notes verbatim.

Likewise, there are three primary explanations for the removal of notes:

1. To document the principal thoughts expressed by the writer or speaker.

2. to improve memory during rewriting, such as before an exam

3. to incorporate the writer's or speaker's words into your understanding.

Students can be trained to use CALL as a language learning strategy to instil this note-taking skill. Regarding taking notes while listening, students can be given a worksheet and instructed to listen to an audio text, which can be from CALL material or an audiotext. A gap-filling exercise on the worksheet may require students to use pertinent information from the

material they are listening to to fill in any gaps. The CALL text allows for the programming of the worksheet. for the assessment to be completed instantly.

Online Catalogue

Another crucial study ability that students need to develop is reference skills. Although manual cataloguing is still an option, people prefer online catalogues, which is where CALL comes into play.A computer can be used to access an online catalogue, which is a list of the resources the library has available. The majority of libraries offer an online catalogue of their resources, which includes books, periodicals, electronic publications, and audiovisual items. Thus, it is the responsibility of the English teacher to familiarize the students with the process of using online cataloguing.

Computer Assisted Language Learning

The learning of languages and computers are intimately linked, and with careful integration, both may help students process and organize their knowledge at the touch of a keyboard. This cutting-edge method of teaching languages, which differs from traditional classroom education, will undoubtedly produce engaging and fulfilling outcomes in language instruction.

Language teachers now have access to an extensive range of instructional resources that have been accumulated over time. Chalk and board have not entirely disappeared; charts, slides, tape recorders, films, overhead projectors, and many other technological advancements have replaced them. The newest technology utilized as a teaching aid is computers. In addition to being effective and engaging tools, computers have a lot of promise for language learning.Not only are computers changing society outside of schools, but they are also changing society inside of them. The advent of electronic media has brought about a shift in the approach to teaching languages.

These days, computers are useful instructional aids for grammar, vocabulary, syntax, comprehension, and even for building interactive communication skills and producing writing

assignments.The idea that CALL programs have the potential to be employed as standalone teaching programs is presented while discussing bridging the gap between computers and language instruction.

Benefits of using a CALL classroom

The utilization of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has demonstrated a positive correlation with increased student motivation. As students engage with language learning through interactive computer programs, the dynamic and visually appealing nature of these tools often captures their interest and enthusiasm. This heightened motivation contributes significantly to sustained engagement and, consequently, improved language acquisition outcomes.

Teachers play a pivotal role in enhancing students' competency levels by customizing CALL programs to align with the curriculum or course design. This tailored approach ensures that the language learning activities seamlessly integrate into the broader educational framework. The adaptability of CALL programs allows educators to address specific learning objectives, providing a targeted and effective means of elevating students' language proficiency.

In traditional classroom settings, individualized instruction can be challenging to implement comprehensively. However, computers offer a solution by facilitating not only individual learning but also in-group activities. The versatility of computer-assisted language learning accommodates collaborative efforts, fostering a collaborative learning environment that goes beyond the constraints of traditional teaching methodologies.One distinctive advantage of using computers in language learning is the removal of restrictions on practice sessions and time. Students are afforded the flexibility to choose content based on their individual needs, engage in numerous practice sessions, and repeat exercises as necessary to achieve mastery. This autonomy over their learning process empowers students and transforms the computer into a valuable tool that caters to individual learning preferences.

Moreover, the self-access feature of computers enhances opportunities for independent learning. Students can navigate through language learning materials at their own pace,

reinforcing their understanding and addressing specific areas of difficulty. This self-directed learning approach contributes to a more personalized and effective language acquisition experience.The integration of computers into language learning also addresses challenges associated with writing activities. Often, students hesitate to edit or correct their written work immediately. Computers alleviate this challenge by providing a platform where students can refine their scripts at their own pace, promoting a more iterative and reflective writing process.

Furthermore, the tutorial modes embedded in CALL software offer students the opportunity to review correct answers and learn from their mistakes. This form of immediate feedback enhances the learning experience, allowing students to identify and rectify errors promptly, thereby accelerating the language acquisition process.

Beyond individual benefits, the technologically enabled learning environment created by computers significantly enhances the overall educational experience. The capacity of computers to store, access, and analyze vast amounts of data surpasses the capabilities of traditional learning resources such as books. This not only broadens the scope of available learning materials but also maximizes students' learning opportunities by providing access to diverse and comprehensive content.In conclusion, the multifaceted advantages of computer-assisted language learning contribute to creating an engaging, adaptive, and effective educational environment. From increased motivation and tailored instruction to fostering collaborative learning and enabling independent study, computers emerge as invaluable tools in enhancing students' language acquisition and overall educational experience.

Advantages of CALL

Students can analyze linguistic patterns with the aid of computers' instantaneous responses. The novelty that is a fundamental component of CALL programs raises students' motivation levels.In addition to assisting students in learning a foreign language or a second language, CALL programs teach computer literacy, which is becoming more and more important in this technological age and may be very beneficial for their future training and professional opportunities.

CALL programs respond to requests for information quickly—virtually instantly.In addition to learning additional words, students who use the CALL technique will also learn how to use those terms. The benefit of the CALL approach is that it allows students to complete the entire study skill activity at their speed and convenience, utilizing their preferred learning methods and styles. Additionally, including CALL in language instruction gives the student a chance to become proficient in the material. Students are learning and using the study skills approach to overcome challenges linked to their subjects. After being introduced to the CALL way of learning at the tertiary level, the students will carry on with the study skills approach and demonstrate a unique understanding of their subjects in the latter semesters.

Limitations of CALL

The user and the programmer can communicate with each other through the computer. But in this comparison, the programmer's and the author's concerns are not mostly the same. While the programmer is primarily a technician, the author will almost certainly be an authority on the subject. Some CALL materials include incorrect lesson content, inadequate documentation, format and content issues, improper feedback, etc., which can be attributed to this author-programmer gap. Similarly, since the majority of software packages are secured to prevent piracy, teachers have little opportunity to add new programs or change the ones that already exist, even if they so choose. For the select minority that creates their content, the hours and days required for planning and programming can be quite significant.

However, these drawbacks or issues must be viewed within the backdrop of computerization's early stages of growth. The speed at which computer-integrated learning is occurring in the classroom indicates that the limitations of CALL approaches are only transient. The next generation of educators and students will grow up with computers. The skills required by computer technology will be taken for granted by them, and they will treat them with the same casualness as turning on a tape recorder or watching television.

Conclusion

The primary goal of a language instructor is to help students strengthen their study abilities, thus they try to utilize computer-assisted language learning as much as possible. After reviewing the approaches that have been covered thus far, the researcher concludes that teachers need to be more creative, resourceful, and considerate to help students understand the value of English study skills and to give them opportunities to practice the language through CALL. Computers are great educational tools, especially when it comes to teaching language in all its forms—vocabulary, grammar, composition, pronunciation, and other pragmatic-communicative and linguistic abilities. It appears that the main advantages of computers for improving language learning exceed their drawbacks.

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