

## THE ROLE OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL) IN TEACHING LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT

Globalization has made technology a key source of information and not only a tool for education. Similarly, language is seen as a source of knowledge and information in addition to being used for communication. The modern generation now relies heavily on computers in their daily lives. They feel far more at ease using computer technology to learn than they do with more conventional methods. Keeping this in mind makes using computer technology for teaching and learning more successful. Computer-assisted language learning, or CALL, is bringing about a revolution in the field of language teaching. The field of language education is undergoing a revolution as a result of computer-assisted language learning, also known as CALL.

**Key words:** CALL, computer assisted language learning, computer, hardware, software, internet.

### INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 20th century, education technologies were one of the most developed areas in the world. Computers, which have entered the school life in the late 1950s in developed countries, are still developing day by day throughout the world. Today, they have become more powerful, faster, easier to use, more convenient and cheaper, and they can process and store much more data, as well. Equipment such as hard disks, CD- ROMs, laser disks and printers used with computers have also developed rapidly. Using these, a computer program can handle sound, pictures and video along with characters.

At the end of the 20th century, the computer-mediated communication and the Internet have reshaped the use of computers for language learning. Computers are no longer a tool for only information processing and display but also a tool for information processing and communication. Learners of language, with the help of the Internet, can now simultaneously communicate with others or speakers of the target language all over the world. Nonetheless, As Dhaif (1989) claims computers can never replace the 'live' teacher, especially in language teaching, where the emphasis is on mutual communication between people. It can just play a role in teaching the second or foreign language as an aid to the teacher.

Today, there is huge amount of foreign language materials next to the traditional grammar book and dictionary. These materials include-course books, workbooks, programmed courses, cue cards, charts, newspapers, posters, picture cards, and cut outs, and so on. These are supplemented by other media, such as radio, television, slides, OHP, video tapes, games, toys, realia, as well as computers, multi media and the Internet.<sup>1</sup>

### **What Is Computer-assisted Learning?**

Before you can decide whether Computer-assisted Learning (CAL) should be your new teaching methodology, let's take a look at what CAL is.

Computer-assisted Learning encompasses a lot of different technologies and ideas. The Intense School, which focuses on computer and information technology, summarizes it simply as **“the use of electronic devices/computers to provide educational instruction and to learn.”**<sup>2</sup>

More broadly, CAL includes the use of electronics such as CD and MP3 players (or record players in the 1960s), DVD players, tablets, smartphones and television. These tools can help better illustrate a point the teacher is trying to make or heighten engagement among students.

CAL also includes online courses and supplemental course materials used in colleges, homeschooling and distance learning. Basically, **any type of technology that can be used to learn** most likely falls beneath the CAL umbrella.<sup>3</sup>

### **Applications of CAL for Language Learning**

While the use of CAL can be useful in any classroom, it's especially beneficial in language learning contexts.

In fact, it's so effective that it gets its own acronym! CALL (Computer-assisted Language Learning) is quickly becoming a preferred teaching tool among foreign language instructors.

Here are some examples of how CALL can help students learn languages:

- **Visual Learning:** Using the internet, you can easily search for pictures of fruits, animals or colors so your students see what you mean and have an image to associate with the word you're describing. You can also use a program like FluentU to demonstrate how words or grammar are used by native speakers. FluentU showcases videos where languages are used naturally, complete with interactive subtitles your students can use to look up the meaning of a word, example sentences, tips on how to use it, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Hoven, D. (1999). A model of listening and viewing comprehension in multimedia environments. *Language Learning and Technology*, 3, 1, 88-103.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad, K., Corbett, G., Rogers, M. and Sussex, R. (1985). *Computers, language learning and language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>3</sup> Razagifard, P. and Rahimpour, M. (2010). The effect of computer-mediated corrective feedback on the language learners' grammar. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*. Vol. 7, No. 5.

- **Listening Practice:** Listening practice is a vital part of learning any language. CALL helps with this by allowing you to, say, play interactive audio designed for English learners. Not only will your students listen to the language being used naturally, but they'll also pick up on pronunciation. They can then emulate the speakers and find their own voice in their new tongue.<sup>4</sup>
- **Tests:** Using CALL technology, you can create your own test and have your students use the class computers to take it. You can also find exam materials on the internet and use those in your lessons. And with programs like Duolingo, Memrise and Brainscape, there's only a tiny time gap between teaching and testing, since students get near-instantaneous feedback from these.
- **Games:** Games are perhaps one of the best ways to use CALL in the classroom. Language students (especially young ones) love playing computer games or doing puzzles in their target language. To them, it doesn't feel like learning—it feels like having fun. They won't even realize they're getting smarter as they try to get to the next level or solve a tough crossword!<sup>5</sup>
- **Online Courses:** CALL can include online courses. These courses can be taken on one's own time at home, possibly as a part of a full college course load. They can also be taken as a supplement to a classroom-based language course. There are hundreds of free and paid language courses online, and many of them can be extremely effective.
- **Communication with Native Speakers:** One of the most important contributions technology has to language learning is that it has given learners access to native speakers. Technologies like italki and Skype allow language learners to work with native speakers, tutors or teachers half a world away.

### CONCLUSION

In the end, it's up to each individual teacher to decide whether computer-assisted language learning is right for their lessons. As long as the pros and cons are evaluated fairly, the use of computers in the classroom can be a great way to utilize new technology and enhance the language learning experience.

The role of computers in language teaching has changed significantly in the last 30 years. We have come a long way. There is still a long way a head to go. In the past, utilization of computers were limited to text and only simple simulations and exercises, primarily gap-filling and multiple choice drills were used. Technological and pedagogical developments now allow us to more fully integrate computer technology into the language learning process. Multimedia programs, such as speech-recognition software, concordance software and moreover Internet provide us opportunities and create an ideal environment to communicate in the target language and accordingly

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<sup>4</sup> Dhaif, H. A. (1989). Can computers teach languages? English Teaching Forum. 27(3), 17–19.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, C. & Fortescue, S. (1987). Using computers in language classroom. London: Longman.

facilitate learning a foreign language in an ESL situation in general and for EFL situation in particular.

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