

The effect of CALL on EFL Intermediate learners' achievement and attitude

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Abstract: Nowadays computers have become one of the most important teaching tools in universities, schools and institutes. In fact computers brought essential change in educational system. This study examined the effect of computer assisted language learning (CALL) on some EFL learners. Participants in the present study are 90 intermediate students with an age span of 20 to 30 years old. They are studying EFL in the Qeshm International Incubator. Participants' English language proficiency is intermediate as determined by language written tests conducted by the researcher and interview with them. This study was a pretest/posttest experiment/control group design. The questionnaire results revealed statistically significant differences between students who have computer technology training and those who have not in terms of their attitudes toward computers and the use of computer technology resources in language learning. The results also showed the positive effect of CALL in Language Learning Classes.

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Key words: CALL, attitude, computer technology.

Introduction

Nowadays computers are so wide spread that one can't avoid it in his daily works. And the numbers of people who use computers is increasing. Using computers and computer assisted language learning become common in EFL classroom and is an important approach in today classes. And it is an important innovation for both teachers and learners. Computers can handle a range of activities and carry out functions at high speed. They can check exercises after they are done by students, move students gradually from easier to more difficult exercises according to their levels and abilities. Computers can provide a range of facilities for students and teachers and technological fields that provide tools for language learning. Using Internet, different soft wares, network, worldwide web and Email are some application of computers which can be used in EFL classes.

Method:

This study is an experimental study that investigated the effects of CALL programs on achievement and attitude by intermediate level EFL students. Two tests were administered: Pretest (T1), Posttest (T2). There is also a questionnaire which determines the attitudes of the learners. As the use of CALL in this study involved the use of technology and participants' attitude towards this use, Fishbein's(1967) Reasoned Action Theory (RAT) were used as the theoretical framework to illuminate

the results of the study.

Sample Population:

Participants in the present study are 90 intermediate students with an age span of 20 to 30 years old. They are studying EFL in the Qeshm International Incubator. These students are randomly chosen from intermediate learners of Qeshm International Incubator, located in Qeshm Island. Participants' English language proficiency is intermediate as determined by language written tests conducted by the researcher and interview with them.

Setting:

The experiment was conducted at the Qeshm International Incubator located at the Qeshm Island. In network computer lab, participants used Pentium 4 computers for this study. In experimental group, the instructor did not instruct and teach the English language practice in a classroom merely equipped with only desks, chairs, and a large blackboard. Instead, the course was executed in a network computer language lab. There were Twenty five computers in the lab and they were all networked. Two computers were set for instructor use only. The network computer lab shares some features with the traditional audio-lingual language lab but except these features, the teacher can teach the teaching materials by playing audio tapes, video-tapes, CDs and using Internet and network. The computer lab has some features that traditional language lab cannot compete. The function of a

computer lab is multiple. It can not only assume the role of a traditional language lab, but also offer teachers more powerful teaching tools with the aid of modern computer technology. Students practice with each other in pairs by themselves. And the most difference between these 2 classes is Internet and World Wide Web; they are two powerful tools available for students in CALL environment and not for traditional lab.

Materials:

The EFL syllabus used in the study was New Interchange, book 1 which is a series of books chosen to be used in Iran Institutes. This material was available into two forms: (a) hard copy for the control group, and (b) CALL that included video and sound clips, pictures, softwares and the feature of interactivity for the experimental group.

Procedure

First, a meeting with the students was held to describe the overall objective of the class and CALL environment and procedures of the study. A pretest was given to all students in the four groups. After the pretest, each participant in the experimental group was given a paper demonstrate a list of sample softwares and different web materials (like email, Face book, internet group, etc) in it, with a set of instructions, roles and responsibilities, and expectations to study independently at home according to a plan set by the instructor. The experimental group participants were taken to a computer lab to check their performance and give them directions on how to best use the computer, softwares and internet. All participants in all groups were instructed to prepare for the lesson by reading it, doing certain exercises, and answering questions. CALL users were instructed to prepare for the lesson by using CALL materials, while the control group prepared for the lesson using the hard copy materials. The participants in both groups were required to spend at least one hour daily, which was the estimated time to complete the exercises needed for the next session lesson. However, CALL users might have spent more time using CALL due to its interactivity and attractiveness. As a check technique to make sure students did their work at home, the teacher checks students' preparation the next session. In class, the instructor taught both groups using regular classroom procedures and materials. Instruction lasted for five consecutive weeks (three sessions weekly and each session lasts 90 minutes).

Finding

This study was a pretest/posttest experiment/control group design. Using SPSS

12.0, three main types of data analysis were used:

(a) analysis of covariance (ANOVA) to control for variability in initial students' EFL level, (b) paired and independent sample t-tests, and (c) statistics. Analysis of variance was used to test the null hypothesis "there is no differences between groups in achievement as a result of CALL use." Pretest was entered as a covariate while the posttest was entered as the independent variable. Paired t-tests were used to examine any differences in CALL users' perception of their knowledge gain as a result of using CALL. Independent sample t-tests were used to test any significant differences between CALL users based on computer competency, years of experience, and daily hours using computer. Descriptive statistics was used for 5-point bipolar scales investigating users' attitude towards and perception of the utility of CALL. For analysis of covariance and independent sample t-tests, the .05 level of statistical significance was selected. The responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire were categorized into topics and presented in a frequency table based on Weber's model (1990) for analogy and reporting qualitative data.

Conclusion:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of CALL on learning EFL in Qeshm. Result showed that there was a significant difference in achievement between CALL users and nonusers in learning EFL. Study's result were in alignment with the result of Smith and Ayres (2002); ALmekhlafi(2003); Charischak (2000); Felix(2001); Robert(2002); Cushion and Dominique (2002); and Fenfang, 2003. In addition, study results showed that the higher the computer skills, and the more computer experience, and the more time using computers, the more benefit language learners get from CALL. Thus, to maximize students' benefit from CALL, students should be trained on how to use CALL and should be encouraged to increase their competency of using computers. Furthermore, CALL users had a positive attitude toward using CALL and had a high intention and satisfaction to use it in the future due to their perception of its utility and educational benefits. Results also showed a high self-perception of knowledge gain as a result of using CALL.

Implications

Based on the results outlined, many implications can be concluded:

1. CALL could be a very useful tool for teaching EFL. It could be used as a classroom instructional tool, the effect of which was documented in this study.
2. EFL teachers should be encouraged and given incentives to integrate CALL
3. in their teaching, and hence improve their

- students language proficiency.
4. As the Qershm becoming an international market, where hundreds of companies are pouring into the Island, the integration of CALL becomes important. Using CALL effectively will result in improving students' preparedness to deal with the new demands that require fluency in international languages.
 5. Using CALL in and outside the classroom will help teachers meet individual differences in learning styles as technology can satisfy visual learners, auditory learners, and audio-visual learners.
 6. CALL can give the language teacher some change in her/his role as certain activities can be given to students to work on at home using CALL.

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