

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF CALL: A TECHNOLOGY-INTEGRATED EMERGING TREND IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

The article explores the cutting-edge approaches to English language instruction that have gained popularity in the twenty-first century. English as a second or foreign (ESL/EFL) teaching has never been an easy nut to crack; however, the mushrooming of new technological support language learning applications has brought great relief for teachers and learners. Alike, there are many new trends like Computer/Mobile Assisted Language Learning (C/MALL) that assist language teachers and learners use for attaining their learning objectives. This study explores one such emerging trend in English language teaching namely Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). It describes the benefits and drawbacks of CALL, its effects on language proficiency, and how to make effective use of CALL in language teaching.

Keywords: Technology, ESL/EFL, CALL/MALL, language teaching, motivation, social media, technology-integrated-curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is prominently known for ‘digital natives’ Generation Y (Millennials-born from 1980 to 1994), Gen Z (1995-2009), and Gen Alpha (2010-2024) who grew up and lived with digital gadgets, the internet, and technology. Their upbringing and routine life have not only been supported by parents, friends, and relatives but also equally and prominently by mobile phones, video games, etc. Katz, et. al revealed that Gen Z is a self-driver who strives for a diverse community, and is highly pragmatic and collaborative. This generation has social flexibility, non-hierarchical leadership, and concerns about inherited issues. Therefore, it is imperative for language teachers to look into learners’ lifestyles, learning styles, interests, habits, attitudes, and motivational factors while designing the course content. Dynamism, evolution, evaluation, modifications, and amendments are part of any course design since it is a dynamic process (Sharma, 2022). Scholars have different perspectives in designing the course. They consider vital aspects of language courses, such as articulating beliefs, understanding and assessing the learners’ interests and needs, conceptualizing content, the best approach to course design, context, goals, and objectives, organizing and customizing the course, assessment and evaluating the course before planning lessons and executing it in the

real classroom. Therefore, language course designers should opt for the optimum method to design a course to make it more efficient and effective for language learners to learn and acquire ESL/EFL. Additionally, the course planners and designers have to ensure that the course design is flexible, evolving, and contextualized. This approach provides opportunities to adjust and fine-tune the course as you design and teach it. A pragmatic approach to course design and teaching in a particular context influences what can and cannot be done. Many factors availabilities of resources, the policies and procedures of the college/institution you teach in, and the availability of time may impact your course design and teaching. Davies and Pearse (2002:194) suggested Course Design Approach (CDA) to language teaching that facilitates teachers finding out exactly who they are teaching in every course they teach. It includes the aforementioned factors, and their functional, academic, societal, and employment uses of language. Acknowledging and appreciating these factors, the authors contend, to sum up, contemporary English language teaching and course design, and bring forth new trends, ideas, and concepts emerging in language teaching and what they hold for classroom practice.

1.1 Computer Assisted Language Learning (Call)

Technology has been an integral part of people's lives today and vastly impacts their routine activities. Alike, mobile phones, laptops, i-pads, and computers are everywhere in today's society so we believe that they have influenced language learning and teaching. Additionally, it has also become indispensable for business, social, political, and economical transactions, and education is, therefore, no exception (Sharma, 2019). Alike, another significant breakthrough is Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). We have learned many language teaching methodologies like Audio-lingual or the Natural Approach, but it's not a teaching methodology. CALL makes use of computers for the purposes of language teaching and learning. Levy (1997:1) states that it is the search for and study of applications of the computer in language learning and teaching.

The knowledge of CALL certainly lessens our worries in foreign language learning; however, we should always get updated on major developments to ensure its best use in language learning. The language teacher should integrate CALL into the classroom by incorporating courses partially online, evaluating CALL materials and related sites, collaborating in CALL projects, and making use of multimedia language laboratories (Fotos and Browne, 2004; Sharma, 2020).

2. RELATED LITERATURE ON CALL

CALL has its own history of development that has been improved over time; nevertheless, there is no specific driving theory, framework, or typical CALL activity behind CALL evolution. This concept began in the 1960s, and came out of two factors: educational needs and technological means (Ahmad et al, 1986: 27). Furthermore, it does not represent one homogeneous type of activity, which can be described simply in terms of a stable, invariant framework relating computer, learner, and task (Levy, 1997:39). We find language learners using their mobiles and other electronic gadgets to attain language proficiency. Technology-mediated language teaching includes different language software to develop all communication

skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing- LSRW) respectively. Salaberry (2001) mentioned that computers use in language teaching differs from basic grammar drills to multimedia software programs, the internet, and various forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as networking and email.

Technological advancements, global awareness, fast flow of information, and globalization also contribute immensely to development, evolution and advancement of the software and related application used in language teaching (Sharma: 2022). The continuous development across the world and inclination towards teaching language through computers and the internet made it easy to develop language teaching programs such as CALL. The long time span of nearly four decades in the twentieth century brought several opportunities for language teachers, planners, developers, and educators to develop, advance, and customize language programs. Similarly, Levy (1997) suggested that CALL has been influenced by a number of developments in the field of second language teaching and learning as well as other computer-related disciplines and technology. This remarkable evolution of CALL was dominated by audio lingual and empiricist theory in the 1960 and 1970s (Levy, 1997:15) while the 1980s saw a boom in CALL due to the development of the microcomputer and much software produced in this period although there was no uniform theory supporting its content or structure (Levy, 1997: 22). Consequently, with the changing times and teaching practices, most CALL users adopt a communicative approach aimed at developing learners' communicative competence to develop and enhance intercultural awareness and competence and communication skills which are essential twenty-first-century skills (Sharma, 2020).

Johns, Hsingchin & Lixun (2008) presented particular pedagogical applications of a number of corpus-based CALL programs such as CONTEXTS and CLOZE, MATCHUP, and BILINGUAL SENTENCE SHUFFLER, in the teaching of English through children's literature and such activities provide more communicative purpose learners' language learning. Similarly, Wang (2012) found e-dictionary usage by Chinese EFL learners helpful in reading an expository e-text and attaining vocabulary that closes the knowledge gap between them and advanced learners. In another study, Kilickaya (2015) examined that the participants instructed by using both computer-based and teacher-driven grammar instruction supported by computer-based materials scored higher than those who received traditional instruction. A few studies investigated the impact of social media, and blog writing on struggling EFL learners' language proficiency (Chen, Shih & Liu, 2015; Sharma, 2019, 2022). This study looked at whether and how the instructional design affected the project's learning outcome—students' communicative writing in social media and online forums. According to Ko (2019), who looked at students' views on utilizing social media and cellphones, the advantages of vocabulary feedback encourage active learning, boosts motivation and teamwork, and enhances word usage.

CALL practitioners differ in considering computers as teachers or a tool to be used in language teaching. However, looking at the diversity of CALL, we may view the role of the computer in two ways as, as a tutor and as a tool. Iwabuchi and Fotos (2004) claim that the computer plays, functions, and acts as a teacher who instructs students through exercises, games, lessons on pronunciation, and other activities. Additionally, Levy (1997) added that by doing this, it

evaluates and renders conclusions on the grammatical soundness of students' speech. Although there is certainly some value to computers as tutors, the aim of CALL is not to replace the teacher with a computer. If not implemented well, the computer as language teacher view has some serious problems.

3. DISCUSSION

Exploring the Possibilities of Call

As with many technological innovations in education till the pandemic, the development of computer hardware has often not been matched by the development of educationally appropriate uses of the computer. Nevertheless, the pandemic times have compensated all that was once considered that time, cost, and effort quite often unmatched with the learning outcomes. The educators in the last century realized that merely buying the hardware and software in context to CALL is of no use if not utilized effectively. Also, the curriculum adopted provided hardly any scope to produce or use computer software for language learners. Mohan (1992) found that poor employment of computer resource is an expensive page-turner and hardly compensate for the resulting cost, possible inconvenience, and the educational value of the traditional workbook material in the first place.

In contrast to the computer-and-teacher perspective, Levy (1997) contends that the computer as a tool enhances and improves the work of the teacher and learner both inside and outside of the classroom. In 2021, Wolbah and Sharma found that computer-assisted language programs encouraged language learners to improve their proficiency. Iwabuchi and Fotos (2004) assert that the goal of the computer as a tool is to support learning. Software for text processing, database administration, CMC, dictionaries, translations, and other comparable tasks are a few examples.

The effective implementation of CALL and its ongoing evolution has enabled educators to embrace a novel strategy known as blended or hybrid learning. According to Yang & Kuo (2023), blended learning activities support students' growth in their intellectual, social, and cultural competencies, as well as their global literacy. Moreover, CALL broadens its horizons beyond formal education and is very helpful for casual English learning in extramural English learning environments. Similar to this, Lee and Lu (2023) investigated the connection between the ought-to L2 self and the L2 motivational self-system and discovered a strong L2 readiness to communicate in both extramural digital settings and classrooms. The aforementioned explanation does not mean that there is no place for the computer as a tutor but we should consider CALL to add value to, rather than replace, classroom language teaching and learning. Therefore, it is imperative to understand to what extent CALL contributes to language teaching.

4. CONTRIBUTION OF CALL TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

The in-depth review of CALL and its related research makes enough room to mention that it is a well-accepted approach to language teaching; nevertheless, due to the diversity and broadness of the concept, we shall explore some of the prominent ways it can improve language teaching

and learning.

4.1 Provide Access to Learning Environments and Opportunities to Use the L2

Language learners usually get a few opportunities for teachers to teach and exposure for learners to learn a second or foreign language. Similar facts are reflected in several studies that show students need more opportunities than they get for extended spoken and written interactions with native speakers or L2 environment (Sanaoui and Lapkin, 1992, Holbah and Sharma, 2021). Conversely, offering opportunities are difficult due to the extensive use of the mother language (L1), and the lack of native speakers willing to participate in language programs (Chapman, 1997). In the Arabian context, for example, many learners are in a situation where they do not have sufficient opportunities to acquire L2 through observation, and language use is authentic; therefore, need to drive communication with L2 speakers. But these problems can be alleviated through the use of CALL/MALL, or Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Learners use them extensively as digital netizens in social media messages, chats, emails, and online discussions, giving learners several opportunities to read authentic material on a range of topics and interact with native and other speakers of their L2 (Chapman, 1997: Sharma, 2021). Besides, classroom teaching, CALL is valuable to L2 learners as it provides rich and varied input and opportunities to use the L2 in real communicative situations which may not otherwise be available.

4.2 Student Autonomy and Control over Learning

The consistent use of mobile phones and computers makes language learning learner-centered and helps cater to differences among learners. Teachers encounter multiple issues while designing and teaching language courses. Sheerin (1989) asserted that it is quite unlikely for any one student in a class of, say, thirty students, to have a diet that is entirely suitable for everyone else in the class. But CALL can help overcome this by giving the learner autonomy, control over the time, pace, and, a little on the content of their learning. Ahmad et al (1986) declared that using a computer allows learners some degree of freedom in language learning because they can decide when to study, how long to study, and what to study. Learners can also increase or decrease the difficulty of a task and get help when they have problems (Kern, 1995). Consistent and judicious use of CALL empowers students are free to choose their own learning strategies and pace.

4.3 Graphics, Sound, and Other Media

The learners often are demotivated, less motivated, or unmotivated to learn a new language; however, the use of graphics, sound, and other media in CALL software makes learning more interesting and easier. According to Higgins and Johns (1984), animations can be utilized to illustrate a tale or demonstrate a grammatical process. Images, graphs, or tables can also aid to clarify the relationship between form and content. Computer graphics, as opposed to books, are more compact and can handle a range of images, including maps, slides, and drawings, all on one computer, removing the need to switch between books (McCarthy, 1995). Additionally, computers can also control other media such as video tapes, CDs, and CD-ROMS which results in a greater variety of learning materials and may also increase motivation (Stockwell, 1995).

4.4 Instant Feedback

Feedback is an important part learning process and CALL programs are able to provide immediate feedback and direct learners to relevant parts of the program if they are having difficulty. More importantly, as McCarthy (1995) points out, computer feedback is much more interactive than feedback from a textbook. Whereas a textbook gives a list of answers and leaves it up to students to decide whether they are right or wrong by comparing their answers to those in the book, a computer can give learners constructive feedback, at least as far as predictable errors are concerned. Prompt feedback also increases motivation by responding to the correct answers, graphic display, or pointer system (Stockwell, 1995; Holbah and Sharma, 2022).

4.5 Constructive Interaction

Being a vital component in all disciplines, interaction is a key ingredient for second language acquisition. Teachers and learners in CALL often have mainly four types of interaction: learner-computer interaction, learner-teacher interaction, learner-learner interaction, and learner-native speaker/other learner interaction via CALL. Mobile phones or computers can make learning interactive between the computer and the learner. It enables learners to decide the time, period, and topic to study. Moreover, graphics and animations may be used as a prompter to carry an interactional value (McCarthy, 1995); and in many CALL programs, the computer poses a question, the learner responds and the computer gives feedback (Stockwell, 1995). Similarly, CALL offers students the opportunity to partake in group activities where they can propose, initiate, discuss, suggest, judge, and manage in the target language in a manner similar to this (Mydlarski, 1998). Such programs have wider scope giving learners flexibility, autonomy, and a chance to interact with other speakers of L2.

4.6 Develop and Boost Motivation, but Lessen Anxiety

Despite the fact that technology users love using them and that this technological mediation reduces their fear and reluctance to learn L2, motivation remains a crucial factor in the language learning process (Sharma, 2017); however, it is not clear exactly how motivation affects second language acquisition (Ellis, 1985). The learner-computer interaction happens in realia which is indeed a motivating factor in itself (Sanaoui and Lapkin, 1992). Some studies have proved such interactions often boost learners' morale and confidence to engage beyond the classroom. Gray and Stockwell (1998) believe that such authentic interaction with L2 speakers allows learners to perceive improvements in their own language ability and enhance motivation. Conversely, McCarthy (1995) feels that motivation and novelty value diminishes over time and successful use of CALL in the language classroom depends on linguistically sound software and its appropriate integration into the language course. Thus, the onus lies on the teacher to ensure CALL programs are implemented effectively so that learners may use them as per their own time, space, and content. This relevant and effective use may reduce anxiety to deal with errors and learn from their mistakes without any embarrassment in class.

4.7 Other Non-linguistic Benefits

In the volatile and competitive labor market, learners need to acquire multiskills that may help them get jobs easily. In addition to the benefits CALL offers, learners improve their computer and digital literacy. Sanaoui and Lapkin (1992) discussed that using computers in the L2 classroom, for whatever purpose, improves computer literacy and keyboard skill. In today's world, at least some level of computer literacy and keyboard skills are necessary so if such skills can be learned at the same time as language CALL will be even more useful and relevant to learners. Furthermore, CALL and computer-mediated instructions develop and enhance knowledge and appreciation of other cultures (Sharma, 2020). Consistent interaction and discussion with native speakers increase intercultural awareness.

CALL programs have enormous potential for language learners to develop their language and related other skills; however, they have a few concerns that need to be looked into to make them more pragmatic and realistic. Teachers often come across several practical and technical problems since there is hardly any theoretically informed approach that serves as a guide to solving problems of computers in dealing with language teaching and learning. Thus, we should always equally consider the resources available when designing a language course along with mobile phones or computers. Computers and other electronic gadgets are easily available in the market at nominal prices which contradicts Higgins and Johns's (1984) opinion that computers are expensive to buy and repair and the high costs may hinder the implementation of CALL. Sharma (2022) recommends technical training to be imparted to language teachers to operate CALL software and computers before it is implemented into their teaching. Many studies discussed technical problems integarting CALL reducing its effectiveness in language learning and teaching (Chapman, 1997; McCarthy, 1995; Sanaoui and Lapkin, 1992); however, these issues, by and large, have been minimized as we have taught online during the pandemic times. Any distraction, anxiety, frustration, and related issues are promptly handled by learners since they are netizens and have knowledge of the latest technological advancements making the language learning process easy and more effective.

4.8 Implications of Call

CALL has evolved immensely since the 1960s but still worried teachers who have no driving theory or approach to SLA in CALL or the development of CALL programs. The study has examined all other issues such as learners' beliefs about language, the social context, and teaching in the design of language courses, yet many CALL programs don't have constructive research about language learning and teaching. New software, developments updation, and upgradation of technology may address technical, and operative problems. Egbert et al. (1999) propounded a CALL theory that assists teachers in making decisions about preparing language learners for vital changes in curricula integarting technology, assessing for effective and efficient learning, and teaching additional languages. The evolution and further research on CALL programs could set guidelines, procedures, and directions for teachers to save time and effort to attain learning outcomes. Judicious and careful planning, execution, and evaluation of

such programs may bear good fruits for both teachers and learners to acquire twenty-first-century skills.

5. CONCLUSION

This study focused on the new trends especially CALL and its applications in language teaching and learning. CALL programs have brought great relief for teachers; however, well supported by digital native learners who are raised with mobile and technology. The previous related works on CALL and its merits studied at length make it viable and appropriate to adopt and implement in language teaching. Through CALL programs, learners progressively attain a wider range of vocabulary, use lexical items more appropriately, and have knowledge of communication skills. Additionally, the study contends that it develops and increases cultural knowledge and awareness, which are regarded as important aspects of language learning. The diverse uses of multimedia software programs, the internet, social media, and CALL serve both as a tutor and language tool. CALL assists teachers and learners in rendering access to learning environments and opportunities to use the L2, student gain control over learning, and enhance positive interaction, feedback, and motivation while lowering anxiety along with the other non-linguistic benefits which, eventually, facilitate learners attain twenty-first-century skills needs to counter employment challenges in future.

Statement

We (Dr. Meenakshi Sharma Yadav & Dr. Vipin K Sharma) certify that the aforementioned titled manuscript is an original work and has not been submitted or published in any other journal.

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