

The Role of Technology in the Development of Language Skills

Hamzeh Moradi

Ph.D Research Scholar in Linguistics, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

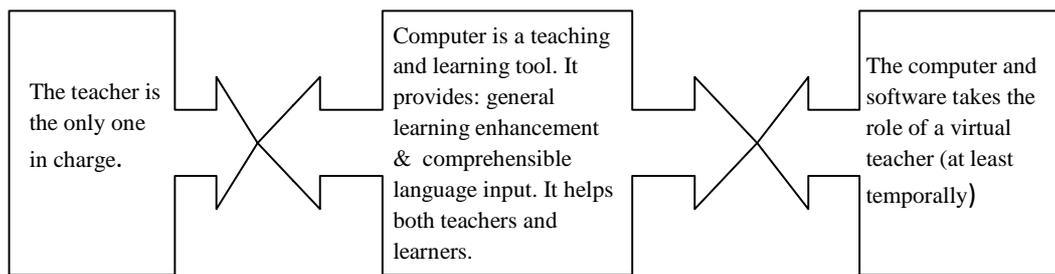
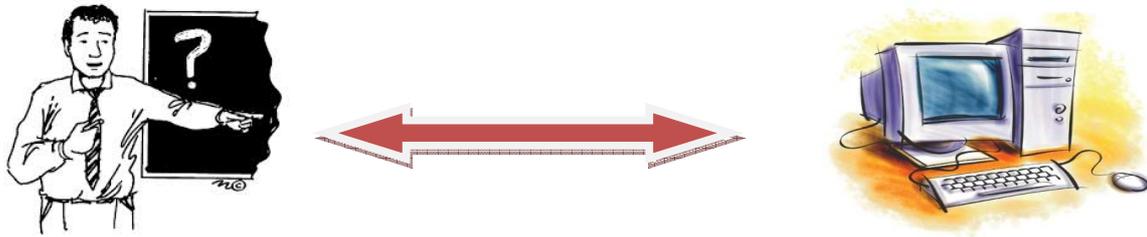
ABSTRACT: Technology has the potential to restructure and transform the traditional curriculum and teaching methods, particularly the interaction with course material and delivery of associated sources. The present study demonstrates that technology can be adopted and integrated into the language classes and it should be considered as an effective and useful teaching tool for English language teachers. The study clearly depicts the ways in which language teachers can use new technology in order to help English language learners to improve their language skills by using technology.

Keywords: technology; CALL; CALT; language learning; computer; language skills

1. Introduction

Teaching students to be literated is one of the highest priorities in every country of the world. Although this fact is one of the priorities, this can also be one of the substantial challenges. Nowadays the classroom environment in compare to the past has been drastically changed. English language teachers encounter to the challenges of a large number of individuals who do not speak English and possess a great extent of transient rate.

Transition of this large number of individuals to be competent in a new language is a very formidable task for the language teachers. This process can sometimes be onerous and frustrating. Learners leaning a new language require a large amount of language support. The teachers and instructors who have taught students acquiring English as a second language are aware of the fact that any support in the process of language learning is very helpful for the learners' language acquisition. English language learners need various types of language experiences. They require hearing language, speaking language, reading language and writing language. Computers can successfully function as a supplement to language learning process. The innovation in computer technology can be helpful for both language teachers and learners; in fact the implementation of computer in language classes has a complementary role in teaching-learning processes.



Many studies have demonstrated that there has been a significant increase in emphasis on computer technology and its use at all level of education (Stepp, 2002).

“The advancement and progress of computer technology within the last decades has eventually introduced a new approach to linguistics” (Moradi, 2014). Computer Assisted Language Teaching (CALT) is teaching approach in which computer technology is used as assistance to reinforcement and evaluation of material to be learned and to be presented. CALT investigate the function and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in second/foreign language teaching. It consists of various types of activities such as extending materials and courseware progress, and pedagogical research and practice.

The progress in information technology has disseminated the application of computers in the process of learning language. Computer can be used as a facilitator tool for the learning language; however it is totally dependent on the users. It is a mediator and just a part of learning process. It effectively functions as a supplement and a complement in the process of language learning.



Computers are very useful devices which can play a significant role in providing worthwhile language experience for English language learners as that are learning the language. The present study demonstrates how computer-assisted instruction (CAI) can play an important role in language learning-teaching process and how it can be a complementary and supplementary teaching tool for English language teaching. Moreover, it discusses the main advantages that have been found in using computer-assisted instruction (CAI) with English language learners.

2. Verbal Interaction

As Liaw (1997) asserts, English language teachers should be able to offer learners a language-rich context in which the English language learners are continuously engaged in leaning activities. Learners require being able to make interactions with each other in order that learning through communication and interaction can happen. Computers can be used to facilitate this kind of environment. AbuSeileek (2007) in his study of effectiveness of two computer-mediated techniques, namely collective and cooperative learning, demonstrates that the cooperative computer-mediated technique is functional approach for teaching and learning oral skills. He depicts that the language learners react positively to both cooperative computer-mediated and CALL. The computers can function as useful tool in order to augment the verbal exchange.

In his research, Liwa (1997) used computer books in order to investigate whether computers can augment and improve verbal interaction amongst learners. The computer books are interesting and interactive stories which appear on the screen of commuters as actual books with text and interactive illustrations. There are also some other options which the learners can use to read the text, such as: sound effect, real voices that read the text loud and music. The story can also be highlighted while reading so that the readers can easily follow along with the text. The interactions of the students while using the computer books were videotaped. The students were divided into the groups of 3 to read the text and stories. The types of the interactions and speech which they employed for commendation with each other were analyzed. Even though the students had a limited knowledge of English, they engaged in different varieties of language functions to complete their task which was reading the computer books (Liaw 1997). They talked in various ways by giving commends to each other, discussing the pictures, software and giving suggestions and sharing opinions, asking many questions from their partners and receiving answers. The study reached to the conclusion that computers can facilitate the use of various language functions by English language learners.

Reading computer books in small group develop the language skills by providing opportunity for language learners to verbally interact each other. The application of computers in language learning and teaching process can improve the traditional curriculum of English language learning and can be a useful supplement to EFL/ESL contexts by facilitating and

promotion verbal interaction which finally results in language development and the acquisition of English.

3. Reading

There are various approaches in which new technology can be employed to develop reading ability. Majority of the simple reading texts are very easy and as well very elementary in content. Older learners may consider these texts not suitable to them and they may think that reading these elementary content books cannot be useful to them. Computers and new technology, however, can augment the level of interest of older learners while maintain the texts simple and easy to read. Another significant advantage of making use of computers for reading instruction is that they can offer immediate and instance feedback on learners' performance. Case and Truscott (1999) on the basis of their study mentioned that the learners were able to promote their fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Computer-based reading instruction permits for the enhanced interaction with texts, attention to individual differences and needs, and independency by the ability to read texts that they would not be capable to read in any other ways.

New technology, computer software programs provide many interactive opportunities for English language learners to practice and enhance their language skills. There are many applications and new software programs for enhancing, grammar, spelling, sight word vocabularies and phonetic skills. When students are acquiring their second language, each and every type of language practices and experiences are worthful to aid in improving reading skills.

4. Vocabulary Development

Computers can successfully be used in English language classes to teach vocabulary. Language learners need to learn the vocabulary with appropriate illustrations and visual clues in context; this will help them to understand the words. Computers can easily provide effective contextual environment for learning vocabulary.

With the help of computer learners become active in one-to-one environment. With the help of computers various learning strategies can easily be incorporated which assist and promote different learning styles. However, it should be mentioned that in order to take advantages of this active and engaging type of instructional approach with the help of computers, the learners need adequate time to get used to the instructional procedures. The contextual approach of teaching vocabularies with the help of computers is substantially effective in developing long-term retention of vocabularies.

5. Writing

As mentioned, new technology and computers can assist English language learners to improve their vocabulary skills and competence. Computer can also help English language learners to improve their writing abilities. According to Lewis (1997), the composition for students should be carefully guided in order that the learners do not become disappointed. Writing in a second language which is still to some extent not so familiar to the learners is formidable. However, computers and new technologies can help to make this easier and more enjoyable. Making use of clip art can assist learners to convey their thoughts clearly.

AbuSeileek (2004) studied the effect of a computer-based program on Jordanian writing ability in English language. The study demonstrated that there were statistical differences between mean scores of the writing task of the control group who received instruction via the traditional approach and the experimental group who received writing instruction via computer which was in favor of experimental group.

Al-Menei (2008) investigated the impact of computer-assisted writing on Saudi students' English writing skills. Based on his research findings, he concluded that computer-assisted writing has an important role on Saudi students' writing skills mainly in two areas, namely: correcting grammar and paragraph writing.

As Lewis (1997) depicts, computers can be used to foster and reinforce the learners' grammar skills. Teachers can ask the students in some way to highlight a particular part of speech (e.g. adjectives) throughout the text or their writing. To highlight, learners have a variety of choices, for example: underlining, changing the font size or type or color and italicizing. Making use of computer as a useful tool for studying grammar and grammatical rules is much more encouraging and motivating for the language learners than to writing with a pencil.

6. Conclusion

Computer-assisted instruction can facilitate language learning in various effective ways. Computer can be utilized as a useful tool by language teachers to assist English language learners to promote their language skills and their competence in English. Computers can improve reading and writing skills and as well they can function as a supplemented tool in teaching to develop vocabulary and verbal language. However, it should be mentioned that computer technology is not a substitute for regular effective teaching. Computer is just a kind of supplement to the regular curriculum in teaching, as it can be useful for the improvement of the competence and language skills of the learners; it functions as a very significant complementary tool in teaching English language.

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