

University Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Facilities Affecting Teaching English language

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Abstract

The present study gathered data on the university computer assisted language learning (CALL) facilities in teaching English language. The participants of this study were 80 MA and PhD university teachers who were selected based on random sampling method at the Islamic Azad Universities, Iran. The research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire that asked the EFL university teachers to give their ideas on the university facilities of CALL in English language classrooms. Data were collected and analyzed through K-S test of normality and independent samples *t*-test. The results of the study showed that the facilities and equipment are poor and universities need to reassess CALL facilities in the classrooms. Regarding computer literacy and CALL skills, university teachers confirmed that computer facilities were not enough to run classes effectively.

Keywords: CALL, university teachers, Iranian context, computer literacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) provides an effective environment in which students can practice in an interactive manner using multi-media contents, either with the supervision of teachers or on their own pace in a self-study mode. The advancement of speech and language technologies has opened new perspectives on CALL systems. The influence of these powerful technological tools has pervaded all aspects of the educational, business, and economic sectors of our world (Levy, 1997). There is no doubt that the computer has established itself firmly in the world of business and communication technology; it has also successes in acquiring a fundamental role in the educational process. This role is becoming more powerful as computers become cheaper, smaller in size, more adaptable and easier to handle. Computers are becoming more appealing to teachers because of their huge capabilities and extensive effectiveness (Dhaif, 2004).

There are numerous studies (e.g., Lewis, 1999; Warschauer, 2002, 2004) discussing the value of computer and new technologies in education and language teaching and learning. Warschauer (2004) found that students think that computers can help them

learn better, faster, write more creatively and more independently. He also found that communication with others could enhance motivation and personal power, overcome isolation and make communication less threatening (Harvey-Scholes, 2018).

Teachers' computer literacy is a very crucial factor. Alkahtani (2007), surveyed faculty who were still not using or integrating technology into their work and found that they did not use technology due to a lack of knowledge in operating them despite their awareness of technology impact on education. Chambers and Bax (2006) point out one way of doing this is to see development not in terms of training workshops but as an ongoing process, possibly through the formation of teams of experts working with non-experts.

This study was conducted based on the advantages of CALL which have mentioned in the literature of this research. The motivation behind this study was to uncover teachers' attitudes using CALL in Khuzestan setting, teachers' computer literacy in teaching English, and teachers' knowledge of computer facilities of universities. The present study also intended to investigate and evaluate CALL facilities at Khuzestan universities and investigated English

teachers' CALL knowledge in these universities. This study aimed to gather data on asking whether university teachers have been provided with adequate CALL facilities in teaching EFL in Iranian context.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design of the Study

The study was conducted based on a post facto design as a descriptive method and aimed to investigate the factors that affect implementation of CALL from teachers' perspectives. This study used a questionnaire adapted from Shin and Son (2007) which investigates the effects of CALL in developing EFL learners' language knowledge.

2.2. Participants

This study was conducted in both governmental and non-governmental universities of Khuzestan where university teachers who teach English in 12 Islamic Azad Universities of Khuzestan. 213 EFL university teachers, who participated in filling in the questionnaire, were selected based on non-random convenient sampling method from Islamic Azad Universities based on their availability in the academic year of 2016-2017. The university teachers were teaching EFL and held the certificate of MA (n=175), and PhD (n=38) degrees. The participants were teaching or studying Teaching or Linguistics courses. They were willingly participated in the research and were informed that they were able to leave the research processes if they wanted. The age range of the participants was from 24 to 70 with a mean age of 43.

2.3. Instrumentation

In this study, a 15-item questionnaire was extracted from Shin and Son (2007) and administrated in order to gather data among EFL university teachers. It was used to collect male and female teachers' perceptions on the use of CALL as a new tool for better implementation of EFL teaching. The profile of the

participants' background was collected including their age, gender, degree, teaching experience, using CALL at home and classroom, and reasons for using it, and their level of familiarity with CALL. Its reliability was calculated through Cronbach Alpha as ($\alpha=.825$) and its face and content validity were assured by means of the confirmation of three experts in teaching EFL.

2.4. Procedure

The questionnaire of the present study was extracted from Shin and Son (2007) with some modifications. The reason of using the questionnaire as the research instrument is that it requires little time, there is no extended writing, they are easy to process, make group comparisons easy, and are useful for testing the specific hypotheses. Thus, the modified questionnaire included 15-Likert-scale items ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* in 5-point Likert scale. The calculation included the measurement of teachers' attitude mean in each item and its percentage. This questionnaire was designed to assess the use of CALL in the classrooms. It included 15 items for teachers to elicit the teachers and students' knowledge on CALL and its application in the classroom. Then 250 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to EFL teachers at the Islamic Azad universities in Khuzestan (where English is taught at BA, MA and MA levels) in the first year of 2016-2017 academic years. However, 213 completed the copies were returned within two weeks. The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics including the calculation of teachers' attitude means and percentages.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Teachers' Attitudes towards CALL

For eliciting information about the teachers' attitudes toward CALL, the teachers' questionnaire was employed. The descriptive results of the teaching questionnaire are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' attitudes on Using CALL in their Academic Settings

Items	Mean	%
1. I have Internet problems of CALL application like lack of the Internet or slow Internet.	3.11	62.2
2. University teachers' needs technology of CALL for teaching EFL	3.68	73.6
3. CALL resources can replace textbooks	1.03	20.6
4. I have enough computer literacy	1.58	31.6
5. ESL/EFL Websites are useful for teaching English.	3.89	77.8
6. Students can be motivated by the use of CALL in the classroom.	2.75	55
7. Students can improve their English skills through the use of CALL.	3.24	64.8
8. Students can learn how to use CALL resources for learning English for themselves.	3.59	71.8
9. CALL is available in my university for teaching courses	1.23	24.6
10. Teachers can enhance language learning skills through CALL	3.74	74.8
11. I am responsible for the success of CALL.	1.69	33.8
12. I am competent to use CALL- based materials in the classroom.	1.07	21.4
13. I know how to integrate CALL resources in to existing classroom curricula.	1.80	36
14. I need training to improve my CALL literacy skills.	3.52	70.4
15. I would like to use CALL-based materials and activities in my classroom as much as possible.	3.82	76.4

Table 1 shows that the responses teachers gave are calculated through mean scores and percentages in this section. Then a description of the results of the questionnaire is analyzed by considering the attitude questionnaire. These general attitudes toward the effectiveness of using CALL re statistically presented and their problems have been shown in the table on the use of CALL in their language classrooms. Their responses can be divided in to three categories: (1) lack of CALL facilities and slow Internet, (2) the need to use technology and CALL in their classrooms, and (3) the readiness of the university teachers to use CALL in their teaching curriculum of the language instruction.

3.2. Analysis of Data and Discussion

The participants of the study believe that the main problem is the lack of enough technology in the classrooms and the shortage of infrastructures of using CALL in their classroom, "*University teachers' needs technology of CALL for teaching EFL*" (Mean= 3.68, 73.6%), the need for CALL and computer literacy, "*I need training to improve my CALL literacy skills*" (Mean= 3.52, 70.4%), and slow internet in the universities and lack of access to electronic journal, "*I have Internet problems of CALL application like lack of the Internet or slow Internet*" (Mean= 3.11, 62.2%) which is significantly high. They also believe that the use of CALL in the classrooms could be beneficial for teaching language skills, "*ESL/EFL Websites are useful for teaching English*" (Mean= 3.89, 77.8%). The teachers also believe that using CALL cannot be replaced the textbooks, "*CALL resources can replace textbooks*" (Mean=1.03, 20.6%). This shows that the teachers do not agree that they can use the CALL classes fully and ignore the traditional classes and paper-materials. They also think that they need much information on using CALL and modern technology to be more competent in using CALL in their classroom. Their idea on the item, "*I have enough computer literacy*" (Mean=1.58, 3.16%), Shows that they are far from using CALL in their classrooms. ESL/EFL Websites are useful for teaching English. The majority of teachers think that the Web sites are useful tools for learning and teaching and note that, "*Teachers can enhance language learning skills through CALL*" (Mean=3.74, 74.8%). More than 70 percent of the teachers' attitudes agree with the role of CALL in helping the learners find pedagogical sources for learning English language since they note that, "*Students can learn how to use CALL resources for learning English for themselves*" (Mean= 3.59, 71.8%). This shows a great paradigm shift in using CALL in Iranian educational context. It seems Iranian educational practitioners are moving towards using CALL in their teaching processes. In fact, the use of technology can be a motivating factor among teachers in this modern era. This movement could be called a transitional period towards using CALL in classrooms. However, there is a fact that the teachers disagree with the statement that, "*I am responsible for the success of*

CALL" (Mean= 1.69, 33.8%). This shows that the majority of teachers are not aware of the importance of their responsibility on gaining the computer literacy and helping the learners to achieve such knowledge since they think this is the responsibility of the government to do this task. The teachers' response to the statement that notes, "*I am competent to use CALL-based materials in the classroom*" (Mean=1.07, 2.14%), shows that the teachers believe they are not familiar with teaching through CALL and computer in the classrooms. They need to be trained in using e-materials and pedagogical Web sites in the classrooms. The teachers also believe that they are not competent enough to find and use CALL pedagogical resources and use them in the classroom since the note that, "*I know how to integrate CALL resources in to existing classroom curricula*" (Mean=1.80, 36%).

The majority of teachers' (79%) responses indicate that CALL can enhance language learning and motivate EFL students because it offers them another environment to study English beside classroom instruction. Teachers also agree with the importance of using CALL and emphasized that the EFL students could find a great deal of activities and exercises online. Learning independently was being achieved gradually as one of the teachers commented. Moreover, they note that the university officials should thin of the teachers' computer literacy and the use of CALL in their teaching curriculum. The response to availability of CALL in their classrooms, "*CALL is available in my university for teaching courses*" received the minimum rate (Mean=1.23, 24.6%) which is moderately low. However, the teachers note that the students may find their classes motivating, "*Students can be motivated by the use of CALL in the classroom*" (Mean=2.75, 55%), the learners may face difficulties in using most of this computer class time to covering the syllabus.

The results of this study agree with Lee (2000) who states that this rapid evolution has inevitably challenged language pedagogy enabling and, indeed, demanding new means of instruction. In language teaching, new approaches, methods, methodologies, strategies and tools should be scrutinized and integrated into the curriculums in a well-organized method in order to cope with the vast changing world. One way for teachers to integrate information technology in to their classrooms is using CALL through software programs, CDs, websites or blogs.

New technological tools may provide authentic tasks that students can engage in and develop their language skills in meaningful and real-life activities that can also be more enjoyable for young language learners. The results of the present study are in line with several researchers (e.g., Hubbard, 2010; Hubbard & Siskin, 2004; Lewis, 1999) who notes that the language learners may participate in CALL exercises independently. They can write comments on the blogs

about music, films, and books. They can also have a discussion board or interactive whiteboard each week.

It must be stated that one of the most important factors in CALL use is teachers' influence. A number of researchers (e.g., Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2009; Hardre & Sullivan, 2008) have found that there is a strong connection between the teacher and the learners' motivation, achievement, negative feelings and effort. The results of these studies highlight the fact that the teacher's level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that affect the learners' motivation (Dornyei, 2005).

The results of this study clarify that the teachers' attitudes toward CALL are dramatically affecting learners' judgment of using technology in Iranian context. These results are matched with Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2014) and Zamani (2010) who note that Iranian teachers need to be competent in using computers and enthusiastic about using them in teaching EFL. Teachers' attitudes towards computers define their attitude towards CALL.

4. CONCLUSION

Teachers' responses indicated that if they were CALL competent, they would give online feedback to students if they submitted their assignments online. However, the teachers' responses show that they preferred to make comments on the hard copies of students' writings or textbooks. Teachers' responses depicted that they did not participate more in the computer classes as in-service teacher training. They showed fewer experiences of teaching and learning online or in the CALL-based classrooms. The teachers should be trained in using CALL and the teaching curriculum should allow them to use it in the classrooms. Teaching EFL lacks such a program in using CALL in the English classes in Iranian setting.

There is a need for further research in Iranian context to investigate whether there is a transitional or developmental environment of using CALL is available in the educational setting. This may be felt more since the Iranian colleges and universities have been newly equipped with some computer laboratories and CALL classes. The teachers' motivation to use CALL in their classes should be investigated, especially when these facilities are prepared by the university officials not only in EFL classes but also in the courses other than English language classrooms.

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