

## Computer Assisted Language Learning- An Essential Tool for The English Language Teachers

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### Abstract

The English teacher of today has many devices for language teaching unlike his or her counterpart about a decade or two ago. There have been many changes and developments in language teaching methodologies over the years. Computer assisted language teaching has been gaining enormous popularity amidst language teaching circles, with many schools and colleges going in for this yet another effective language teaching device. This paper emphasizes the need for the English teacher of today and tomorrow to keep up with the new emerging trends in language teaching. A lack of knowledge in this area would undoubtedly make the present day English teacher "an incomplete professional."

### I. INTRODUCTION TO CALL

The development of communication technology resulted in the production of sophisticated gadgets to help teachers carry out their responsibility more effectively. There have been many innovations in educational technology. One such is computer Assisted Language Learning and this has immense educational potential. CALL is nothing but using computers in the language teaching classroom to teach grammar, vocabulary, syntax and comprehension. Computer can be used either for individual or group activity depending on the kind of exercises that is selected.

### II. TRAINING OR TECHNICAL EXPERTISE IN USING CALL

Moving on to the question of whether the teacher needs any special training to handle computers in the language the answer is No. Educational soft wares now provide a number of authoring packages which enable the teacher to create exercises imaginatively without any knowledge of computer programming intricacies. Teachers can manage to handle CALL with just a training period of a day or two. All he or she has to acquire is familiarity with the components of computer, and master a few select commands for authoring and practicing exercises.

### III. ADVANTAGES OF USING CALL SOFTWARES

Once the teacher becomes acquainted with how to work with CALL softwares, they can easily manipulate the computer and author a variety of exercises to cater to the learner's needs, the syllabus specifications and the learner's language proficiency level. There is CALL software available to teach the different different aspects of language. Examples of such soft wares used in our university are:

Listen 1 & 2: To improve the listening skills

Learn to speak English & Pronunciation Power. To improve the speaking skills.

#### English Mastery

This is a program in which all the four skills are taught through various exercises followed by tasks to improve the same. Each exercise has a title and an introduction about the text. Later the text is completely deleted. There are only blobs in the place of letters. The student guesses each consecutive word in the text and is awarded points for correct guesses and loses points for wrong guesses. It is more like a linguistic puzzle. The fundamental principle is that of a cloze test, where missing words are identified from context. This kind of activity enables the learners to improve their vocabulary, knowledge of syntactic relations in the language and the grammatical forms that words should take. It also gives practice in the ways in which connectives, linking sentences and ideas are used. Last but not the least, it also insists on scrupulously accurate spelling.

Group work with English mastery is more productive because a text is reconstructive in a number of ways when different learners bring in different areas of linguistic knowledge and expertise. This gives rise to useful exchange of ideas and suggestions. This can be used to write conventional cloze tests and also items to which there is a range of possible responses. The learners can thus try out a variety of answers for each gap in the text instead of just supplying one single answer. The teacher can create exercises based on the linguistic and learning objectives.

#### Talk to me

It is used to learn correct pronunciation of all sounds in English. It helps to listen to our recorded speech

and thus pave way for improvisation.

All these softwares have separate student and teacher programs. It enables the student to work out the exercises either in the explore mode (gives immediate feedback and allows learners to explore a range of different answers) or in the exam mode (delays feedback till the end). The teacher program enables the teacher to write and edit files, save them on disk or print on paper.

Computer networks and electronic mails provide the language learners with opportunities for authentic communication with native speakers of the target language. They can also improve the writing skill as well as the thought process involved in writing among the learners.

Raimes (1992) states that both the process of revising what one has written and getting feedback from the readers are essential for improving writing skills. National and International Networks WAN allow the learners to share information via electronic mail, bulletin boards and discussion lists. The local area networks link computers in an office, a department or a laboratory to each other.

The computer reduces what Kemmis calls "inauthentic labour". The teachers in language classes give students exercises to write. The student most often does not revise or correct his script, even though it is incorrect. Teachers thus gain more experience of proof reading than students. The computer helps to reduce this handicap. CALL softwares have tutorial modes which help the student to explore the correct answers and learners learn more from the mistakes they commit. The computer has a powerful self access facility. It gives immense scope for self-learning. It is more a learner-centered activity as the student can learn what he feels he needs practice in. Students can thus have a mastery of their own learning experience. Computers can accommodate themselves to the requirements of the individual student.

Computers are good at processes which need repetition and attention to detail. The teacher can author exercises in such a way that it is relevant to students needs, to the syllabus objective. The thematic, linguistic content, materials and tasks can be adapted to suit the objectives and the student's language level. The computer can store, access and analyze more data than books.

Cononelos and Oliva (1992) state that the computer networks hold the greatest promise for language teachers who seek interactive media. The feedback gained by the learners from responses of the native speakers is an important factor in improving their writing.

Students not only generate computer responses directed to them but also spark dialogues between respondents. Thus learners become co-creators of text generated by parties authentically interested in the chosen subject.

The written competence gained from CALL can gradually be transformed to the learners speaking competence as well the exam mode (delays feedback till the end). The teacher It is obvious that in a normal classroom, students revert to their native language once the teacher is no longer within earshot. But in CALL, the learners feel compelled to use only their target language. As there is no time pressure, students may take their own time and effort to express themselves in the target language. They may also have unlimited to formulate their comments, to describe, narrate and expand on topics more freely and easily than in any type of oral situation. There is also no psychological pressure of the fear of making mistake or looking foolish. The length and breadth of their entries are not restricted and hence their individual styles are allowed to flourish.

#### IV. CONSTRAINTS IN USING COMPUTERS IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Enormous cost of setting up a language laboratory and the maintenance of its hardware and software components. Problem of time management- the computer lab can accommodate only a limited number of students at a particular time. Most schools and colleges have large classes. It is difficult to get one computer for one learner.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The teacher is central to any scheme of education and cannot be replaced by technology. Technology is a tool and a servant within the control of the teacher. Technology is a tool and a servant within the control of the teacher. If the teacher is weak and does not know how to handle the servant, the latter will take over the former.

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