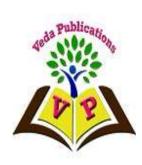**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

BENEFIT OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING(CALL)

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays with the modern age of technology, we easily get distracted with all the gadgets around us. So, it is of utmost importance to put technology to good use, for example, to study all subjects. Technology can be used as an aid to teach all subjects. Such changes in the technology driven classes have proved to be very effective. Implementing Computer Assisted Learning has become one of the prime requirements in education. In this paper the focus will be on the use of computers for language learning. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) can be used effectively to teach some of the most important concepts related to any language. Grammar and vocabulary are the most important pillars with which any language functions effectively in a community. Hence, enforcing the use of CALL in teaching grammar and vocabulary helps in developing the language skills of learners. This paper enumerates the benefits of CALL and lists a few software or tools that would strengthen our grasp of the language. CALL has tremendous potential for improving the teaching and learning process in the language classroom.

Keywords: *Language Learning, Computers, CALL, Software, Classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

CALL is a method of teaching and learning languages with the help of computer and Internet based resources such as standalone software available on CD-ROMs/DVDs or websites. Computers are used to present and reinforce the materials to be learnt. The learning resources are usually interactive. Apart from its use in self-study, CALL supplements face-to-face language instruction but does not replace it.

IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

Grammar is the most important part of any language because grammar sets the rules of the language. In order to master any language, learning and being proficient in its grammar is compulsory. Anyone who has mastered grammar has inevitably mastered the language itself. This is because grammar provides the basic structure to a particular language. Hence, learning and mastering any language's grammar is absolutely essential. Vocabulary is the set of words that one needs to know and use to convey meaning in a particular language. Having good vocabulary is very important if one wants to communicate effectively. Learners need to know the correct words to express their ideas. If learners lack good retention of words they will be unable to express their ideas correctly while speaking or writing. Focusing only memorising words as part of passive vocabulary will make the learners confused in using the appropriate words while expressing in speech or written form. Hence, learning and having a good vocabulary is of utmost importance to communicate in a particular language.

THE NEED FOR CALL

Vocabulary is one of the toughest parts to master. It is the part that takes maximum time and effort to learn. Similarly, grammar needs a lot of practise to get the hang of. Practising grammar and vocabulary can be cumbersome and boring, as it becomes monotonous. Hence, a new and innovative method is needed to making learning these crucial skills easier and more fun. It shouldn't be studied as a burden. This is where CALL comes into play. Nowadays, technology is prevalent everywhere. Every modern child is addicted to gadgets. All gadgets nowadays are connected to the Internet. The resources on the web can easily be accessed by everybody from any global location. Hence, the digital world can be used for sharing knowledge, and not just for entertainment. Nowadays, people find it more engaging to learn from their gadgets than books. Plus, CALL provides interactive sessions with the benefit of self-paced learning. Students can learn without stress and pressure. Plus, teaching won't be affected by human errors and negligence, as a computer will commit neither. Also, it becomes easier to spread knowledge to a wider audience effectively and efficiently. For example, a CD-ROM attached with an English grammar book can contain questions related to grammar and vocabulary. They can contain grammar and vocabulary tutorials. Plus, it can contain the correct pronunciation of words in the form of a computerised voice. Also, such information can also be given without a CD-ROM, like through the Internet.

BENEFITS OF CALL

Repetition is essential and part of any learning process, whether it is science, language or any other subject. But repetition can be tiring and boring, both for the student and the teacher. Here's how CALL can help solve this problem:

- Repetition is the key to learning anything.
- A computer is good at carrying out repeated drills, since it is a machine and does not get tired with presenting the same material over and over again. It does not judge the student and is unbiased.
- A computer can provide learning material based on individual needs. So, the students are able to learn at their own stride.

It also helps to free up class time for other activities. This gives students a personalised experience. But this can become a one-sided approach, and lead to the student becoming disinterested. This is where the communicative approach towards CALL comes into play. Researchers realised this shortcoming of CALL and worked to overcome it. The features of the communicative CALL approach are listed below. This approach

- focuses more on using forms rather than on the forms themselves

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- teaches grammar indirectly and contextually
- encourages students to be creative and original
- never rewards the students with messages or audio or colourful symbols. The answers are not subject to critical judgement or evaluation
- does not directly point out the mistakes of the students. Many responses of students are acceptable.
- focuses on the target in a way that feels natural.
- does not resort to any print based materials.

Multimedia and the Internet use in CALL is called as integrative approach. Multimedia involves hypermedia. There are many advantages of involving hypermedia in language learning. The advantage is that a more authentic learning environment is created, since listening is combined with seeing, which leads to inputs from multiple senses and hence leads to better and more interactive learning. All skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking are used simultaneously. Learners know their learning process as they take their time to study. Hypermedia helps them focus on the strategies and skills to learn better. (Warschauer, M., 1996) Other advantages include:

Computers can assist both the students as well as the teachers. Hence, even teachers can reap its benefits. (Pennington and Steven, 1992). Due to advancement in technology, computers have become smaller, faster, cheaper and more efficient. They are more accessible than ever before. Hence, teachers can easily take advantage of CALL. (Evy, 1997). Advancements in technology have greatly improved the quality and variety ofs multimedia applications. This makes interacting with both the program and other learners easier. (Felix, 1998). Computers are very flexible when it comes to scheduling classes. This makes it very convenient and easy to implement and use for teaching. They can also go with the pace of individual students, hence providing individual attention with personalised content and activities. (Oxford and others, 1998). Computers can provide interactive lessons which enrich the knowledge of the students. (BamrungTorat, 2000) Another aspect of

CALL is the fact that languages can be learnt more effectively through computer games. This is based on the principle that 'Learning is Fun'. Since everyone loves games, students will readily and quickly learn through games. Examples of CALL vocabulary games are Spelling Bee, Magic Hat, Hangman, Find a Word, Word Puzzles, Cross Words, Scrabble etc. Such games greatly improve vocabulary. Research has also proved that students who have studied using CALL have performed better in examinations that students who have studied without it. This shows that students who study with the aid of CALL learn better and faster. This is the reason more and more schools and colleges today are adopting 'Smart Class' and e-learning as a teaching aid. It also becomes easier for the teacher to give assignments.

COMPUTER THE TOOL: WORD PROCESSING, GRAMMAR CHECKERS, CONCORDANCES

Learning grammar involves repetition and practice, and CALL helps achieve just that. Some examples are lessons on Irregular Verbs, Definite and Indefinite Articles etc, drills on a variety of topics (Advanced Grammar Series), games (Code Breaker, Jr. High Grade Builder), and programs for test preparations (50 TOEFL SWE Grammar Tests). Grammar can also be taught through comprehensive multimedia packages (Dynamic English, Learn to Speak English Series). (Mark Warschauer, 1996) Pronunciation programs, for example, Sounds American, Conversations etc, provide the facility to students to record and playback their own voice and compare it to a model. Firsthand Access, The Lost Secret has common facilities like playback. These programs have similar facilities like any other multimedia software . (Mark Warschauer, 1996) Programs, tutorials and games for practicing vocabulary were common. Hangman and scrabble are quite useful for learners. Many software or programs were used in the computer making the computer more as a tool. Wordstar and Word processing were commonly used in computers. Programs such as Microsoft Word prove to be very useful for use in academics and business. ClarisWorks, MicrosoftWorks, SimpleText and TeachText are also very simple to use for learners. (Healey & Johnson, 1995a). Grammar checkers like Grammatik are designed exclusively for native

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speakers language. (Mark Warschauer, 1996) Concordancers can be a wonderful tool for advanced students of language, linguistics, or literature. Concordancers are used to find and teach all the uses of a particular word like Oxford's MicroConcord. This takes information from various British newspapers, along with various other sources. (Mark Warschauer, 1996) Limitations However, nothing is perfect. There are some limitations of CALL:

- CALL equipment (hardware and software) are expensive.
- Teachers are not trained to operate CALL equipment. Training also costs money.
- Computer hardware is difficult to install and maintain.
- Hardware may not be capable enough to run the programs.
- The variety of types of exercises, such as fill in the blanks, match the columns, MCQs, etc are limited.
- There is a lot of junk on the Internet. Data must be screened by the teacher before the students can access them.

CONCLUSION

Computers undoubtedly dominate the world of business and communication. Innovations such as CALL prove that computers are also dominating the world of education. Computers are also becoming cheaper, compact, portable and userfriendly. As a result, they are becoming more and more appealing to teachers and students alike. Both parties are readily adopting computers. CALL provides great resources easily and conveniently. It also reduces the burden on the teacher and makes teaching and learning more interesting. But this does not mean that computers will replace teachers. CALL is meant to assist human teaching, not replace it.

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