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THE ROL OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL) IN CULTIVATING COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

JYOTHI DHANUKA
Assistant Professor of English
Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad, Manthani
jyothidhanuka@gmail.com

JYOTHI DHANUKA

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how the computer as a teaching tool enhances the ways of teaching to cultivate Communication in English to the undergraduate students. Computer has no inherent wisdom, no mind of its own, no initiative and no innate ability to learn or teach. It is powerless unless the programs are done or associated linguistic material by the teacher and then gets information out of it. Computer performs with remarkable speed, exactly the instructions given to it by a man. These instructions can be typed into the computer from a keyboard or can be assembled in computer programs, which consists of series of instructions for the computer to execute. It should not be forgotten that its role in teaching is solely a teaching aid. It is unable to create educational material without the help of the teacher. Computers will never substitute teachers. It is totally dependent on the teacher. It is the teacher, who can make the computer speculates various roles. The computer can be situated in the classroom, in a special laboratory or CALL laboratory undergraduate level a specially designed area of a library or in any convenient place where the student or small groups of students can work without interruption. It is advised to the teachers to adopt the computer as a tool to teach the language skills. The computer can be used as a tutor for language drills or skill practice, as a tool for writing, presenting, and researching, as a medium of global communication. It communicates with the student visually by displaying text, graphics or video images on a screen; it can also present sound in the form of speech, music or other varieties of audio equipment. Usually, the communication can be done with the computer by clicking on icons with the mouse or by typing commands and responses at a keyboard. As a result, the computer as a teaching tool enhances the ways of teaching by offering students a variety of language inputs and expanding students' learning experiences in real and authentic contexts.

Key Words: Computer Assisted Learning, composition, Pronunciation, Communication.

Introduction

English is the most important language in everyday affairs of the modern world. It is extensively used in the fields of banking, business, companies, industries, travel and tourism, administration, aviation, law, etc. in general and education in particular. English is considered as Second Language (SL) in India. At present, with the advent of globalization and a revolution in Information Technology (I.T), the importance of this

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language will be multiple in future. People who have command over English language are appreciated and opened up lot of career opportunities. So desire to learn English is not an isolated phenomenon; it is a part of the world wide trend to learn this language of opportunity and international value. Globalization has profoundly influenced on higher education in the 21st century. English language has gained much focus by the effect of the precise progress in globalization. Communicating in English fluently and accurately is at the heart of second language learning in India. Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another; it involves a sender transmitting an idea, information, or feeling to a receiver. Communication skills are essential for the successful career of a student. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the most important skills in English. It is needed for the engineering students to acquire good communication skills in English in this twenty-first century. The ability to communicate in English should be learnt appropriately and must be taught effectively. Employers expect and examine good communication skills in English as one of the basic competencies that every graduate should have to perform at the time of interview. They assert that the ability to communicate in English spontaneously is valuable for obtaining employment and maintaining successful job performance.

This technological development has brought a lot of innovation and revolution in English language teaching and learning. One of the important ways of achieving this is through the introduction of computer education in schools, colleges and universities. Computers provide authentic materials through multimedia and internet. They can be used to teach and evaluate student's performance and they also facilitate to them to stop or move backward or forward for appropriate learning activities which are not possible in classroom lecture. Thus, patience memory and unlimited capabilities of computers can defy the conventional teaching methods and fulfill the demands of 21st century.

The Role of Computers in the Society

Computer is one of the most creative innovations of man. It has changed the way people work and live. In fact, modern world would be incomplete without computers. Computers have a significant role in each and every field at the present scenario. Society is gradually accepting the fact that computers can change the manner in which the things are done. Computers save valuable time of the people through communication to send and receive information, to make reservation of tickets, to operate bank accounts, to pay for electricity, water and telephone bills, and insurance policies and also do online shopping, etc. Trains can be operated automatically and traffic signals are coordinated to produce best traffic patterns like increasing reliability and safety. Thus, computers provide more efficient and accurate services and save precious time and money. Even in agriculture sector, computers are used to examine the condition of soil and crops. This makes them to use the natural resources like water, fertilizers and sunlight in proper time which increases yields. In the areas of health and medicine, computers have brought a remarkable change in health services. Though computers have been using in many sectors such as the utility services, banks, railways, airlines, industries, agriculture, and hospital, etc. but the importance of computers in the education has still not been recognized. It is needed to supplement Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education in general, English language teaching in particular. Bertram Bruce believes that students should "learn technology, learn through technology, and learn about technology". Integrating multi-capabilities of computers technology like data, text, image, graphics, animation, audio, and video in the ELT classroom enables the students to understand and learn L.S.R.W skills in a better manner. Computer-based lessons are needed to prepare in various subjects by the experts to educate the masses. They have become more fascinating to the students because of their endless capabilities and extensive effectiveness. Thus, computers are quite effective teaching tool for better learning.

The Origin and Development of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Though computers have been used in education since the 1950s, vigorous development occurred in the 1960s (Saettler, 1990). Computers

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were first implemented in education as early as the 1960s, but the use of computers was very limited. The existence of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the academic literature has been recognized for about the last thirty years. The term CALL was emerged in the 1980s and originated from the earlier used term of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI). CALL is a tool in which a student uses a computer to improve his or her English language skills.

Advantages of CALL

1. CALL programs present the learner with a novelty. They teach the language in a more interesting manner to the learners. It can be presented through the games or problem solving techniques. As a result, the irksome drills become more interesting.

2. They demonstrate ideas and thoughts visually which are difficult to explain in text.

3. CALL programs offer a valuable source of self-access to the different levels of communication of the students.

4. They also provide immediate feedback in terms of pronunciation, syntax and semantics.

5. They offer unlimited varieties of activities with considerable potential for varying learning situations for speaking. The computer can be connected to a video for visual input or to a Compact Disc (CD) for listening comprehension.

6. CALL programs provide the ESL students with some sort of computer literacy, which is essential in the modern society.

Hence, computer is a sophisticated teaching aid which is helpful to the teacher just like any other teaching aid to enhance their teaching. It can also offer the students more freedom in their learning task by being more accessible and more versatile. Though CALL programs can provide a lot of fun and entertain to develop the students' grammatical competence and communication skills but they cannot replace the teacher. Besides this, there are limitations also. The student, who does not have knowledge in using the computer, may be too excited and may be wasted a lot of time. The students need to work in isolation with computers; this obviously does not help in developing normal communication between the students, which is a crucial aim in any language task.

CALL programs deal mainly with listening, reading and writing skills. The speaking skill is neglected to some extent. These programs are developed based on the writer's imagination of what would take place while communicating, rather than on what people really say in real life situations. Hence, this creates frustration among the students when a genuine utterance is rejected by the computer. It takes time to develop these programs and their cost is also questionable. However, if CALL programs are carefully planned as part of the pedagogical classroom, they can help the students to learn English language skills in a stress-free environment.

Conclusion

The language teacher, who has the prime objective to develop communication skills in learners, seeks to make an effective use of the computer-assisted language learning method. An analysis of the methods discussed so far leads students to conclude that it is ultimately the teacher who has to be more innovative, more resourceful, and more thoughtful to create awareness in students about the importance of cultivating communication and to provide opportunities to practice the language by using CALL. Computers make excellent teaching tools, especially in teaching languages in any aspect, be it vocabulary, grammar, composition, pronunciation, or other linguistic and pragmatic-communicative skills. The major benefits offered by computer in enhancing language acquisition apparently outrank its limitations.

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