THE IMPACT OF CALL TECHNOLOGY ON IMPROVING IRANIAN STUDENTS’ ACCENT

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ABSTRACT

CALL (computer assisted Language Learning) has given man versatility in many areas and seems the paramount representation of technology for today. So it proved some of its promises in modern societies, and is recognized as one of the most effective ways of improvement in the realm of language learning. The hypothesis posed was to investigate the impact of CALL on improving students’ speaking in one of the high school in Arak and Delijan (city in Markazi province). After administration of English proficiency test. Total number of them became 300 students. 150 students from Arak high school and 150 students from Delijan high school. Then they divided into control and experimental groups. Afterward the experimental group received CALL as the instructional materials i.e. they have learned speaking by using computer and control group have learned by teacher. Based on the statistical calculation and by using t-test, there was significant difference between control and experimental performance groups. It means, students’ accent in experimental group in post test was better than the control group.

KEYWORDS: Call Technology, Students’ Accent, English as a Foreign Language

This study aim to explore the effect of computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the speaking ability (their accent) of high school students in Arak. In first part, there are some ideas and researches which have done by many researchers in previous years about CALL.

As Al-Jarf (2005) defined CALL: It is an approach to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement and assessment of material to be learned, usually including a substantial interactive element. Levy (1997) defines CALL as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning".

According to Chon(2011): Because of a surge in technology use, there have been numerous improvements and advancements which solidify the need and opportunity for enhancing pedagogy in classrooms. He pointed out that, while CALL is in its 5th decade, the field is still emerging. Because of a surge in technology use, there have been numerous improvements and advancements which solidify the need and opportunity for enhancing pedagogy in classrooms.

As Al-Kahtani, Al-Haider (2010) mentioned: A number of other early and recent studies investigated why teachers do not use technologies in their teaching (AlKahtani, 2004; Dupagne & Krendl, 1992; Hadley & Sheingold, 1993; Mumtaz, 2000; Rosen & Weil, 1995; Winnans & Brown, 1992, Kumar, Rose, & D'Silva, 2008; Osika, Johnson & Buteau, 2009). They found that teachers avoid using technologies in their classrooms for various reasons. The following is a list of some of these reasons:

- Lack of teaching experience with CALL
- Lack of onsite support for teachers using technology
- Lack of help supervising students when using technology
- Lack of CALL specialist teachers to teach students computer skills
- Lack of computer availability
- Lack of time required to successfully integrate technology into the curriculum
- Lack of financial support
- The resistance on the part of some language teachers to change and the fear that technology will someday replace them
- The high cost of technology equipments and the rapid change of technology.

Some researchers such as Fabry and Higgs (1997), Levy (1997), Marcinkiewicz (1994), and Hadley (1990), and Yerrick and Hoving (1999) discussed about the availability of technology that does not guarantee their integration in classes by teachers.

Despite this fact, Marcinkiewicz, (1994) expressed: it is believed that technology can improve teaching and learning and the quality and quantity of teaching and learning
According to Atkins and Vasu (2000), teachers’ attitudes or concerns have a significant influence on the use of computers in the classroom. Lam (2000) also emphasizes that teacher’s personal beliefs of the advantages of using technology for language teaching influence teachers’ decision regarding technology use. Similarly, Kim (2002) points out that critical factors affecting successful integration of technology into the classroom are associated with teachers themselves, such as teachers’ perceptions and attitudes. She adds that teachers’ perceptions and attitudes toward teaching and technology can be regarded as a facilitating or inhibiting factor, giving them more confidence or a major barrier of technology use. Redmond, Albion and Maroulis (2005) also reported that teachers’ personal backgrounds such as personal confidence, interests in using ICT and willingness to try something different are significant factors that might promote ICT integration in the classroom. (Park and Son, 2009).

Dashestani (2012) discussed about interest in the application of computers and technology in educational contexts that exist in work of some researchers such as Albirini, 2006; Bartsch & Cober, 2003; Connor & Wong, 2004; Lee, 2000; Timucin, 2006. Furthermore, special attempts that made to include computers and technology in educational curricula by these researchers: Atai & Dashtestani, 2011; Aydin, 2012; Karber, 2001; Madden, Ford, Miller, & Levy, 2005.

He added that as an important line of research in this regard, there are several studies which have explored the attitudes of different educational stakeholders toward the application of computer-assisted learning in educational contexts like: Duggan, Hess, Morgan, Kim, & Wilson, 2001; Durndell & Haag, 2002; Li & Kirkup, 2007; Liaw, 2002; Vekiri & Chronaki, 2008. So he concluded that majority of studies conducted in EFL contexts have examined the attitudes of students toward the use of CALL (e.g. Ayres, 2002; Stepp-Greany, 2002; Thang & Bidmreshki, 2010; Timucin, 2006) while there is still limited research addressing the attitudes of EFL teachers toward the use of CALL (Aydin, 2012; Ismail, Almekhlafi, & Al-Mekhlafi, 2010).

Bax, (2003) emphasized that CALL needs something far closer to Delcloque’s type history. It is remarkable, in fact, that there exists no in-depth analysis of the history of CALL along the lines of, say Howatt’s history of ELT (1984), and it is arguable that without it.

According to Park and Son (2009): If language teachers have a variety of positive teaching and learning experiences in using computers, they are likely to be more confident and skillful in implementing CALL in their own classrooms. Therefore, teacher development programs should be provided for language teachers to deal with issues of using computers and gain competent skills in managing computer-based tasks and activities in the classroom.

We cannot properly formulate an agenda for the future use of CALL. Of the main accounts mentioned by Delcloque, the first (Ahmad et al., 1985) focuses almost exclusively on the factual aspects of technologies many acronyms but little analysis; the CALICO study (Sanders, 1995) relates only to North America and is again weighted towards ‘facts’ rather than analysis, while Levy’s (2000) account admits to being only a review, rather than an in-depth discussion. Chappele (2001) is similar. Other reviews of the history of CALL too numerous to consider in detail here—do exist but are for the most part of the ‘review’ type, with insufficient attempt at critical analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

Regarding the above discussion, the following question and hypothesis is formulated:

Q: Is there any significant difference between students’ English accent compared with students who don’t use computer.

H: There is a significant difference between students’ English accent compared with students who don’t use computer

METHODOLOGY

Participant

The population of this study was all of female students in two high schools in Arak and Delijan. The first numbers of population was 410 students which 220 students were from Arak and 190 students were from Delijan. After administration of General English proficiency test, students who can get 35-50 score from 50 score have chosen as participants in this study. So, total number of them became 300 students. 150 students from Arak high school and 150 students from Delijan high school.
Materials

The different materials which were used in this paper includes:

a) Background questionnaire: It was utilized to elicit some information as: the subjects ’full name, their age, name of their school.

b) Language Proficiency Test (Nelson test,400B): This test was composed of multiple choice cloze passage, questions about grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Totally it contained 50 questions.

c) Speaking test (pre test): Before teaching new materials, speaking test for examining students’ accent was administered for two groups who were experimental and control groups.

d) The World Wide Web (WWW or Web): It refers to the whole constellation of resources that can be accessed using gopher, FTP, HTTP, Telnet, Usenet, WAIS, and other tools.

e) Speaking test (post test): After teaching new materials by using computer for experimental group and teaching speaking to control group by teacher, the speaking test had been administered for two groups.

Procedures

The following procedures were adopted in order to meet the objective of this study.

Phase 1: The Background questionnaire was given to the subjects to fill them out. It consisted of some information such as: the subjects ’full name, their age, name of their school.

Phase 2: All students were divided into control and experimental group and after administration of English proficiency test, experimental group were exposed to teaching by speaking by computers for 10 sessions and control group also exposed to teaching speaking without computer. At the end, the researchers administered same speaking test for both groups.

Phase 3: Before teaching new materials, speaking test was administered for two groups.

Phase 4: After teaching special materials to two groups as experimental and control groups, experimental group exposed to learning speaking by using computer and control group have learned without using CALL technology. The researchers used The World Wide Web (WWW or Web): The World Wide Web can be used in a myriad of ways for language teaching. It provides linguistic exercises, authentic reading materials, simulating communicative exercises such as student discussion of trips or vacations, and is used as a medium of student publishing. So, in this study, it has been used for teaching speaking by discussion among students. After two week of treatment, speaking test as a post test administered for two groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Independent samples ’t’ test was employed to compare the mean scores of data. Statistical representation of the analyzed data is given in Table 1 and Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Results of t-test for mean scores on proficiency scores on two groups of female high school students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group2</td>
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</table>

So as indicated in above table (p<0/056), two groups could get the similar scores in English proficiency test. According to this statistical data, there wasn’t significant difference in their English proficiency test.

According to H: There is a significant difference between students’ English accent compared with students who don’t use computer. Independent sample t-test has been used for comparing mean scores of two groups.
Table 2: Independent sample t-test of two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>S.E.M</th>
<th>95%Confidence interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>-4.72009</td>
<td>1.40527</td>
<td>.45264</td>
<td>-5.61991 - 5.61991</td>
<td>-10.428</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would be mention that t=-10.428 and df is 86 and also, sig=0.000.,So H0 is rejected. In other word, there is a significant difference between students’ English accent compared with students who don’t use computer. So the hypothesis was accepted.

According to Park and Son (2009):The Korean teachers of EFL have positive attitudes toward the use of computers in general and recognize the benefits of using CALL in the language classroom. They think that the future of CALL is bright since the computer has become a basic tool for learning and teaching. While agreeing that CALL can provide students with highly motivated learning environments and opportunities to engage in meaningful and authentic learning, they point out that the Internet serves as a useful educational tool for motivating students, providing a large amount of information, teaching resources and materials and a place for experiencing different cultures and communicating with other people in the target language. While the teachers are convinced of the usefulness of CALL, they encounter.

The general results of Dashtestanis’ paper (2012) illustrated that the EFL teachers who participated in the study have attitudes toward the use of CALL in their EFL courses. They also pointed to several rationales for using CALL in their classes both in interviews and questionnaires.

CONCLUSION

Data analysis in this study indicated that CALL technology has positive effect on students’ performance in their speaking ability. So both hypothesis was accepted.

In first part, the researchers examined subjects in general English proficiency and the result has shown that there wasn’t significant difference in their General English proficiency. Then, the effect of CALL technology was examined by teaching speaking due to using computer in experimental group.

The general results of Dashtestanis’ paper (2012) illustrated that the EFL teachers who participated in the study have positive attitudes toward the use of CALL in their EFL courses. They also pointed to several rationales for using CALL in their classes both in interviews and questionnaires.

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