

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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CALL of English

Nallipogu Vishranthi, M.A. English

Abstract

The monopoly of both technology and English language usage is the mark of today's modernized and globalized environment. Students are equipped and equipping themselves for the competition through English Language learning and acquisition. Students have new ways of learning second language now by the introduction of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in addition to the normal pedagogic process. But the question remains, Is CALL successful in what it is intended for or what are the challenges that it still faces?

Key words: English Language speakers, second Language acquisition, English language training, CALL, Gapmaster, vocabulary games, pedagogical practice, second language learning, functional English language.

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Advances in Computer and its technology in various fields of today's modernization scenario are noticed globally. Likewise, English language learning has also undergone many changes impacting heavily the conduct of corporate business. Both these developments relating to computer technology and English language have created an atmosphere of stiff competition. Individual success and to some extent success of business corporations seem to be closely linked to the skills employees have in these two areas since faster, better and effective communication is an essential element for successful operation of business.

The English language is the first preferred language of business in most developed and developing countries, but many in these countries have difficulty in mastering this language. Students from rural parts and from families that did not or do not have any acquaintance with English face enormous difficulties in India.

High Marks in Exams versus Actual Mastery of English

Looking at the pedagogical practices in language teaching, we notice that teachers are trained to teach the students in some particular fashion and manner. This practice focuses on the end result in terms of grades. The end product does not really reveal the quality of mastery of the language. We are forced to assume that higher grades indicate higher quality of mastery of the language, but in reality students with high grades are also unable to use the language effectively in real life situations. Students, like all others, go by the grades they have achieved, not by the real mastery of the language.

New Ways of Teaching and Learning

Now, with the introduction of computers and learning to use Internet, Intranet and digital variations in teaching subjects, teachers find new ways of teaching and reaching to the students more lively. In this context, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was introduced to language learning with more interactive sessions making use of multimedia devices such as computers, TVs, CDs, etc. The introduction of CALL has created self-learning facilities for the students and this brings in clear competition to achieve quality.

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Varieties of Learning Materials for CALL

CALL has great varieties to offer to students as part of their second language learning of English. The students are presented exercises that contain grammar, vocabulary learning and appropriate language use with appropriate tone, etc. CALL provides a variety of stages of learning: beginners, intermediate, and advanced students. Some of the well-known programs are Gapmaster, Testmaster, Textmixer, Wordstore, Vocabulary games are available in plenty. Descriptive titles given to the learning packages help us to choose the most appropriate for our class.. For instance, *Wordstore* can be understood by the large number of words in store to learn along with the corresponding meaning.

The Roles of Teachers and Students

Teachers and students need to co-operate fully to make CALL a success. Although students can do the work independently in CALL, they still need the help of the teachers to explain and offer more familiar sentences, words, etc. based on individual needs, since CALL is usually designed for a population with similar characteristics. Individualized instruction is possible with the help of the intervention of teachers. For this teachers also should be adequately motivated and trained in the use of gadgets and software.

Teachers enable students to enhance their learning capability, improve their learning conditions through constant reviewing of the students' behavior and feeling connected to the environment of learning.

Challenges before CALL

CALL has some important challenges to meet. Students and teachers using CALL programs may have to be proficient in the use of technology first. This needs extra attention and extra training. Perhaps this may take a lot of time for the rural students who may not have had much exposure to the use of the Internet. Educational institutions may not allow their teachers and students to use the computer often enough to get fully trained. Browsing centres may be of help here. In addition, both students and teachers need to have some technical knowledge for troubleshooting.

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Teachers would need additional technical supporting training added to their pedagogical training for the classroom.

Still the questions remain, whether the teachers and institutions are willing to take a call for CALL of English. There are many other specialized courses for functional English language training such as English for Specific Purposes. CALL experts and the field should provide for programs for English language training for specific courses like the Engineering branch, Computer and Information Technology, Pharmacy, etc. Ultimately we need to equip our students to learn English in order to meet the needs of their chosen field even as we enable them to learn English at their own pace.

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Nallipogu Vishranthi, M.A. English
Plot 1079, Flat 102
Anirudh Arcade
Ayyappa Society
Madhapur
Hyderabad 500081
Andhra Pradesh
India
vishranthi.n@gmail.com