

COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Introduction:

The popularity and acceptability of Computer Assisted Language Teaching (CALT) is rapidly increasing as multimedia developments and technology are advancing. In the past few years, CALT systems have become fully integrated with audio and video support, creating interesting and attractive presentations. With the Internet emerging, a new platform for CALT systems has evolved. Thus, there has been a move from CD-ROM-based CALT to online Web-based CALT, enabling more connectivity and interactivity with other students or teachers. Important examples of why CALT has moved to Web-based mediums include the ability to carry out audio and video-conferencing, use chat rooms and e-mail and communicate with native speakers of the language.

This new technology in language education has also increased learner autonomy, creativity, productivity and team work. Interactive teaching approach and CALT have been used to tutor language learners through language drills or skills practice; as stimulus for discussion and interaction; or as a tool for writing and research.

Computer-Assisted Language Testing can be defined as “an integrated procedure in which language performance is elicited and assessed with the help of a computer” (Niojons, 1994). A very common example of the use of CALT is for multiple choice questions. If the testing system is designed and implemented correctly, then the results of the computer testing will be immediate and without errors, whereas if multiple choice questions are corrected by people, there is always the possibility of human error, and also the process is a lot lengthier and time consuming. It is important, however, for CALT programs to provide the learners with clear and accurate feedback results.

One of the most successful CALT systems is the one used for the TOEFL exams. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is taken worldwide by nearly a million people each year. It is an important test since the results determine whether students are to be accepted into many U.S. universities. TOEFL used to be a ‘pen-and-pencil’ exam, but since 1998 it has become, and still is, a computer-based exam taking advantage of CALT. CALT will continue to play a vital role in the future of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

Methods:

Programmes which have been specifically designed for English language teaching:

- CALL-specific software (CD-ROMs, online)
- Web-based learning materials (in websites, blogs, wikis, etc.).

Programmes which have not been specifically designed for English language teaching:

- Generic software (e.g. word-processors, presentation software, spreadsheet)
- Computer-mediated communication (CMC) programs (e.g. synchronous: online chat; asynchronous: email and discussion forum)

Classification:

Computer-Aided Language Learning (CALL):

Any kind of language learning activity that makes use of computers.

Computer-Assisted Language Testing (CALT):

An integrated procedure in which language performance is elicited and assessed with the help of a computer.

Distance Learning: A planned teaching/learning

Experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning.

Human-Computer Interaction (HCI):

The study, planning, and design of what happens when humans and computers work together.

Intelligent Computer-Assisted

Language Learning (ICALL):

The exploration of the use of Artificial Intelligence methods and techniques for language learning.

Pedagogy:

The activities and theory of education or instructing or teaching.

Video-conferencing:

The use of multimedia elements, digital cameras, and microphones to capture video and sound, and transmit it live at real time to other users who will receive it using their display units and speakers.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, using CALT materials in the personal website in language teaching is advantageous for both learners and teachers. It is ideal for carrying out repeated drills, since

the machine does not get bored with presenting the same material and since it can provide immediate non-judgmental feedback. With this, there is a joint motivational element that makes the students' participation free and spontaneous. That element also promotes interaction and new roles for both students and teachers. Therefore, students have more responsibility, risk taking, interaction and self-evaluation towards learning. Learners interact at their own pace and according to their learning styles; consequently, they tend to perceive the computer activities as less threatening and inhibiting than traditional classroom oral interactions. It also entails the meaningful use of the target language and demands teachers and students to treat language as a medium of communication. CALT makes language teaching or grammar learning communicative and interactive. It can present such material on an individualized basis, allowing students to proceed at their own pace and freeing up class time for other activities. It allows and encourages students to generate original utterances rather than just manipulate prefabricated language. It can judge and evaluate everything the student user does and reward them with congratulatory messages, scores, and lights. The exercises allow for immediate feedbacks is flexible to a variety of student responses. It can even use the target language exclusively and creates an environment in which using the target language feels natural, both on and off the screen. It is further concluded that the use of computers helped establish interaction among the students and teacher.

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