

## Utilizing CALL Approach to Help Undergraduates at Sudanese Universities Improve their Oral Production

BATOOL IBRAHIM AL BASHIR  
DR. MAHMOUD ALI AHMED

College of Languages  
Sudan University of Science and Technology  
Sudan

### **Abstract:**

*This study sets out to explore how the use of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) affects the oral delivery of ELF learners. The study derives its significance from the fact this particular skill of speaking is not a popular one amongst our Sudanese learners. There is a strong conviction that speaking can only be learnt through full or complete involvement at native-speaking environment through what we technically call immersion. To implement this small project, an experimental design was adopted. The study sample was 100 university freshmen. The population was divided into a control group and an experimental group. The control group was taught the listening course through a traditional method while CALL was mainly applied classes with the experimental group. Selected types of technological gadgets were drawn upon here, to conduct the study. The devices were craftily used by the students to make conversations and exchange views, and practice listening, too. Duration of the study lasted over the speaking course which continued for 14 weeks. The pretest took place before the course and the data was statistically treated and analyzed, while the post test took place after the course was taught. The results showed that the application of CALL promotes the learning to speak accurately and fluently among university level students. The study recommended that language teachers should change their teaching methods to match today's learners' abilities, interests and needs.*

**Key words:** CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), oral production, ELF students

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, computers are viewed as information processing and data saving devices. Currently, they have proven to assume a more crucial learning role in society. Recent technological advances have created the possibility of new ways of teaching and learning. The passive teacher-centered learning approach has now shifted its focus towards encouraging students to actively participate in their learning process. Crystal (1997) explained that in the past foreign language teaching depended on teaching techniques that made the whole operation teacher-centered. Consequently learning was a passive activity.

Recently, developing a high learning competence using technology has been of main interest for many learning institutions. Nevertheless, taking full advantage of this potential requires for considering the teaching/learning procedure in new ways as well as to master the technology itself. Today computers play a crucial role where they function as 'an added tool or resource, as a model or a real-world phenomenon or system, and as an environment to train and prepare users for real-world tasks and experiences' (Pennington 1995: 11). With respect to second/foreign language teaching and learning, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), defined as 'the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning' (Levy 1997: 1), offers an unrivalled possibilities to provide learning experiences that are impossible without a computer.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Speaking is an important area in foreign language learning. Mastering this communicative skill of English as a foreign

language is a challenge for learners. According to Richard and Renandya, (2002:201), “A large percentage of the world’s language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking”. Barring in mind the fact listening is often implied as a component of speaking they are often associated with each other.

Learning has been affected by modern technology .In the age of information learners are exposed to different sources of information, internet and available software had made a significant change in acquiring knowledge. This generation is largely connected with technology ,Sudan is not an exception ,in this respect newspapers have claimed that statistics show Sudan to have a leading number of users of the internet via mobile phone. According to Bax (2006) we have to take advantage of the possibilities offered by technology and move towards normalization of the situation when these technologies are used in our daily classwork as naturally as a whiteboard or a course book. Unfortunately in Sudan the use of CALL in the tertiary level is almost missing. Consequently the importance neglectable has encouraged the researcher to investigate in this study the effect of using CALL in the learning of speaking among the Sudanese tertiary level students ,conducting an experiment to test the difference in the students learning of this skill.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION:**

To what extent does CALL promote the learning of speaking among Sudanese undergraduate students ?:

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

The significance of this study is due to that it sets how to investigate the extent to which CALL effects the learning of both listening and speaking .Not to mention that it adopts an

experimental design as far as listening & speaking is concerned which is a bit rare in Sudanese English Language research library.

The study presents statistic facts that measure the influence of technology in language learning in general and listening & speaking in particular .the usage of technology has widely spread that they became an essential factor of living for some.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Application of CALL in teaching and learning speaking is mainly determined by the nature of speaking itself. According to Pennington (1995), spoken language competence covers two aspects, the learning how to differentiate and produce sounds of language and link them together in fluent strings of sounds comprising syllables, words, phrases and longer utterances, and decoding of individual sounds (Phonemes). Meaningful aspects refer to learning how to build as well as to decompose grammatically coherent utterances and to link them to communicative functions according to rules of pragmatic appropriateness in a given speech community (Gong, 2002).The major application of CALL in the mechanical dimension is in pronunciation. New multimedia products incorporate extensive texts, graphics, animation, audio, and digitized audio or video clips. With some software, computers can produce relatively natural speech from individual phonemes stored as digital codes that are strung together as the user types on the keyboard (Healey, 1999).

CALL also offers software that provides diagrams and video clips or animation of the speakers' mouth in motion while pronouncing sounds and words. With such programs learners can be familiar with the target sounds and can differentiate between them. Speech recognition technology, the ability of machine to process spoken input and to respond (Healey, 1999),

enables CALL software to include active participation in speech production, oral reading, and limited conversation in the range of language activities available to students.

By combining speech recognition technology used to convey speech problems and now applied in second / foreign language learning for phonetic analysis or training, a computer system can give learners real – time feedback with clear and interpretable visual images on the learner's performance in pronunciation (Ibid, 1999).

Due to the complexity of natural spoken language the applications of CALL in developing speaking competence in meaningful dimension is currently realized by the stimulations CALL environment creates. However, computers lack the intelligence of understanding, producing and responding to natural rapid speech on unexpected topics. What CALL can do well at present is the setting up of an environment that encourages learner to speak and create a micro-world in which they can communicate in the target language, both on-and-off-line. This stimulated world makes a life of its own, and can make communication within that context seem authentic (Pennington, 1995).

Discussion forums can also be used in the development of learners' speaking skills. Pennington (1995) argues that the development of 'conversation – like written discourse' in e-mail might have 'a carryover to spoken language'. Phinney (1995) points out that more students are likely to participate in an on – line classroom as several students can be writing their contributions at the same time.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher was intended to examine the learning of speaking through CALL among tertiary Sudanese students at Sudan University of Science and technology. To achieve that desired effect an experimental approach was adopted to study

the effect of CALL in the learning of both skills. The study examined the research questions (see chapter one). As the case is in experimental designed research the population was exposed to a pre-test and a post one after the experiment took place.

### Population and Sample

The population of the study is first year students taking English as this major in the Faculty of Languages at Sudan University of Science and Technology; in the academic year 2014/2015. The total number is 100 students. All these students share the same mother tongue and are taught by the same teachers. These students had already studied courses that were supposed to have provided them with the necessary information about the speaking skill. They had studied courses such as: "Listening and Speaking" and "oral communication skills". The objectives of these courses were to develop both listening and speaking.

The students were previously divided into two groups by the Head of the English department A and B .Group A was served as the control group and group B as the experimental group .All students agreed to participate voluntarily in the study .The course for the two groups was taught in the same classroom and time of the day one group studied at Sundays while the other at Mondays. The experimental group was taught by using computers and technical devises in addition to the use of social media applications such as Skype and Whatsapp.

The following table shows the design:

	Assignment	Pre-stimulus measurement	Stimulus	Post –stimulus measurement
Group A (experimental group)	R	O1A	X	O2A
Group B(control group)	R	O1B	Time	O2B

**Table (1)**

As A=the experimental group, B= the control group, O1pre-test and O2 is the post-test.

If we name the change in the experimental group by C (O2A-O1A), and that in the control group C1,then C1-C gives an estimate of the test stimulus.

### Data Collection Instruments:

As the study follows an experimental design the research tool is the pre experiment test and a post experiment test .The research population was divided into two groups a control group and an experimental group .Each group has a number of 50 students.The researcher set the two tests that where validated by experts. The tests took place considering the experts notices and advice.

### Speaking pre and post test:

The speaking test validity was checked by experts for approval. The speaking test was piloted to check its reliability .Five students from the Collage of Education were chosen to do the speaking test twice within one week. They were asked to speak about themselves in a maximum of three minutes time .Their results were recorded and analyzed statistically to test the reliability .Comparing the means of the two tests which scored 2.72 for the first test and 2.75 for the second it was clear that no statistic difference was noted ,indicating the reliability of the speaking test.

Test	Mean
test(1)	2.72
test (2)	2.75

**Table (2)**

The test consisted of three optional parts as the students were asked to speak about one of the topics read in a three minutes period of time. The researcher adapted the IELTS exam criteria to evaluate the students performance .The criteria involves fluency ,lexical recourses (vocabulary), grammatical range and

accuracy, and pronunciation ,grammar and pronunciation represents accuracy. The expression of the speaking test results was as ordinals in six levels from excellent to failure.

### **Procedures of the experiment:**

To conduct the experiment the researcher began by testing the students in both skills Listening and Speaking. The pre-test took place after the division of the students into a group of two and after the setting of the experiment was settled. As for the speaking test the researcher was assisted by three teacher to test the students speaking in which each student would enter the test room individually.

To conduct the experiment the researcher taught the course of Listening & Speaking differently. As the population was divided into two groups as mentioned before a control group and an experimental one, the experimental group was exposed to CALL. The experimental group learned speaking using computers. The group also used the popular communication application Whatsapp to exchange communication, practice speaking, and share their oral production with the members of the group. A Facebook group as created to act as a meeting forum. While the controlled group learned speaking through a classical traditional method.

As the class where the course took place was a traditional unequipped one, researcher had the students use their personal computers, laptops , pads and smart phones during the course to proceed the experiment .they could get a soft copy of the course book and its audio. A Whatsapp group was created which facilitated learning at times other than the time fixed in the class timetable. Students could collaborate, record this own voices while practicing the tasks and sharing their production electronically with their group members. In times the electricity power failed us to continue in others technical issues as low internet connection would occur thus the process went on.



After 13 weeks the semester ended and the speaking post-test for both groups took place .The same procedures followed in the pre-test were followed in the post test thus with different tests .

### Data Analysis Procedures:

After the test was marked, the data was collected and coded to be analyzed using the SPSS package to obtain the frequencies percentages ,and t-test .

### RESULTS:

T-test for results of the control group speaking tests show that all the variables have scored equal to or less than 0.5 sig.score , which indicates that there is significant difference between the students performance in the pre and post test. The experimental group results of the pre & post tests are presented in the following table:

Skill	Pre-test		Pro-test	
	Failed	passed	Failed	passed
Vocabulary	48%	52%	16%	84%
Grammar	38%	64%	24%	76%
Pronunciation	38%	62%	10%	90%
Fluency	32%	68%	20%	80%

**Table (3)**

### CONCLUSION:

As the table declares statistics show significant change in all the tested variables concerning speaking. Vocabulary results for the pre test show that 48%of the students was poor, while only 6% scored a poor degree in the post test.22%of the students only passed conversely 6%of the students failed and 94% passed in the post test.

Grammar results show that in the pretest 38%of the students' performance was poor opposite to 24%of the students in the post test. While 64% of the students passed in the pretest, 74% did in the protest. Pronunciation results show that

those who scored a poor degree in the pretest were 38% of the students, whereas only 10% scored a poor degree in the post test. Those who obtained a pass level in the pretest were 62%.in the other hand 90%of the students passed in the post test.

Fluency results show that 32% of the students failed in the pretest while only 10% did in the post test. As for passing scores, 68% of the students passed in the pretest compared to 90% of the students in the post test.

All results clearly indicate considerable progress in the student's performance of speaking after being taught threw CALL.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1- Language teachers should change their methods to match today's learners' abilities, interests and needs.
- 2- Social media application should be adopted in the teaching of speaking EFL.
- 3- Faculty should obtain continuous career development training to follow up their learners' needs, interests and abilities.
- 4- Associations should develop and encourage virtual class teaching and learning as it saves time, money and efforts.

### **REFERENCES:**

1. Bialystok, E. (1990). Communication Strategies: a Psychological Analysis of Second-Language Use. Basil Blackwell. Oxford.
2. Celce-Murcia, M. and Goodwin, J. (1996): Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to

- speakers of others languages. New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. Chapelle, A. C. (2001). *Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing and research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  4. Chappelle, A. C. (2003). *English Language Learning and Technology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
  5. Chinnery, G. M. 2005: *Speaking and Listening online: A survey of Internet resources*. *English Teaching Forum* 43(3).
  6. Chinnery, G. M. 2014. *CALL Me.... Maybe: A Framework for Integrating the Internet into ELT*. *English Teaching Forum* 52(1).
  7. Egbert, I. and Yang. 2004: *Mediating the digital divide in CALL classroom*. *Re CA:* 16(2).
  8. Farch, C. and Kasper, G. (eds.). (1983). *B. Plans and Strategies in Foreign Language Communication In Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*. Longman. London.
  9. Goodwin, J.- Brinton, D.- Celce-Murcia, M. (1994) "Pronunciation assessment in the ESL/EFL curriculum", in MORLEY, J. (Ed.) *Pronunciation Pedagogy and Theory: New Views, New Directions*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL. Pp. 3-16.
  10. Graddol, D. (1197) *The Future of English? The British Council*. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-elt-future.pdf>.
  11. Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford University Press.
  12. Howatt, A. and J. Dakin (1974) *Language laboratory materials. Techniques in Applied Linguistics (Vol.3)* London: Oxford University Press.

13. Kasper, G. and Kellermna, E. (eds.). (1997). Communication strategies: Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics Perspectives. Longman. London.
14. Lazaro, L.A. (1996) "introduction to language assessment", in Lazaro, L.A, et al. (eds.) acquisition and assessment of Communicative Skills. Alcala de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universided de Alcala, pp. 9-20.
15. Lewis, A. (1992). "Group child interviews as research tool". British Educational Research Journal. Vol. 18, pp. 413-432.