

The Influence of CALL on Students Attitudes toward Comprehension

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Abstract

The study is the product of an on-line session with Oregon University. It aims at developing the students' attitudes toward using computers in learning to get the advantages of CALL and autonomous learning. The researcher has depended on a one-group design of a pre-scale and post-scale to measure the effect due to exposure to computer using.

The problem of the study

Using computers and internet has rapidly spread into the different fields of the daily life in many countries while Iraq was so busy with wars, blockade and the bad interior affairs. No doubt, using computers and internet has its impact on all fields of life in general, and on education in particular. Since Iraq had been isolated for a long time, Iraqi teachers have to bear new responsibilities to face new challenges. In spite of the recent reform, university-level as all other levels still need much to improve and develop. Cox (2008: 1) states that the challenge for educators is to utilize technology in ways that facilitate the highest level of learning outcomes.

Rogers (1995: 2) suggests that the first step in adopting an innovation, such as web technology, is to be exposed to information and develop knowledge about the innovation.

Inan and Ozdemir (Unpublished study: 1) state that the increasing presence of computers and other emergent technologies affects not only daily activities but also educational settings which force change in classroom instruction giving teachers new roles and responsibilities.

Asan and Koca (2006: 1) state that the internet use is spreading rapidly into daily life, and directly affecting peoples' ideas and behavior. It has its impact in many areas including the higher education system. They also refer to that educators who advocate technology integration in the learning process believe that it will improve learning and prepare students to effectively participate in the 21st century workplace. This cooperates with Isman's (2004: 1) reference to that the great impact of technology requires individuals to be more creative rather than accepting all conditions without questioning due to their lonely searching to get information.

Koszalka (2001: 2) states that teachers are not choosing to incorporate web resources into their teaching even though these new resources have been empirically shown to facilitate student interactivity, increase mental functioning, and promote social interaction.

The first step toward innovation is to establish a good attitude toward it through close exposure. The lack of computers in Iraqi classrooms has led most of the students to be unfamiliar to using them and have low behavioral attitudes though their good cognitive and emotional attitudes toward using them. This lack of exposure led the students to hesitate in using computers in learning, considering it a waste of time, and losing the benefit of CALL and autonomous learning.

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The classroom-based research aims at encouraging and directing the students to get the utmost benefit of using computers for the improvement of language learning. It works toward developing the students' attitudes to be with using computers in learning. This is achieved through involving the students in a range of activities and assignments using computers to develop their attitudes after their exposure to using computers.

Using computers in teaching and learning enhances education. Learning can be achieved faster and better. Different fields of education and references can be easily accessed by using internet. Computer users can learn and practice autonomously. Since teachers in general have not received the necessary training of using technology in teaching, it is necessary to concentrate on the university-level students who will be the future teachers and builders.

Moreover, the current study displays a full portrait concerning the real standard of the students' attitudes toward learning with computers to show the necessity of exposing them to the use of computers.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to examine, identify and develop the students' attitudes toward using computers for learning outside the classroom, after exposing them to CALL and autonomous learning as part of their coursework. Thus, the research aims at spreading the computer literacy among the students in order to enhance their cognitive, emotional, behavioral attitudes and autonomous learning.

Hypothesis of the study

It is hypothesized that the students' attitudes toward learning by computer are low because of lack of exposure to computer usage in teaching.

Limits of the study

The study has been limited to teach reading comprehension, choosing some passages from the prescribed textbook 'Sixty Steps' by LG Alexander, as well as to direct the students to the sites www.trainyouraccent.com and Interesting Things for ESL Students, in order to listen to some optional passages by native speakers; and then students have been asked to comment on them interacting with the teacher through a created class on the site www.nicenet.org.

The study has been limited to the students of the 2nd year of the English Department – College of Education for Women, Baghdad University.

Definition of Terms

Attitude: Zimbardo & Leippe (1991: 2) define attitude as an evaluation disposition toward some object based upon cognitions, affective reactions, behavioral intentions and past behaviors.

The operational definition is that it is the mental and physical readiness to be with or against (using computers in learning) due to past exposure and cognition. It had been measured according to the current scale. The high score is considered with using computers in learning; the low score is considered against it.

CALL: It refers to Computer Assisted Language Learning. It is the process of language learning through the use of some kind of software.

Warschauer (1996: 1) shows the history of CALL and the variety of computer uses for language teaching. A computer can be a tutor that offers language drills or

skill practice, a stimulus for discussion and interaction, and a tool of writing and research; in addition to the use of internet to get limitless materials.

The researcher agrees with Garret (1991: 7) who demonstrates that using a computer in learning does not constitute a method. But, it is a medium of a variety of methods which may be implemented.

The theoretical body

The research concentrates on enhancing autonomous learning, cognitive, emotional and behavioral attitudes toward using computers in learning among university-level students.

Autonomous Learning: Holec (1981: 1) defines autonomy learning as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning”. According to Benson and Voller (1997: 3), autonomy learning can be achieved in institutions where learners study completely depending on themselves. The researcher believes that autonomy learning can never be achieved without a strong internal desire for learning.

Cognitive: The word ‘cognitive’ refers to the thought process toward awareness or knowledge. It also refers to information processing, conceptual resources and perceptual skills.

Emotional: It is the positive or negative feelings such as love, hate, like or dislike.

Behavioral: Ford-Martin (2001: 1) states behavior is usually but not always the reflection of established beliefs and attitudes. It can be influenced by a number of factors such as preconceptions about self and others, monetary factors and social influences (what peers and community members are saying and doing).

Literature Review

-Asan and Koca (2006: 1): The study is designed to examine students’ attitudes towards internet and realize their tendencies based on gender, education level of parents, institution, academic programs, having computer and internet connection at home. “Tendency Towards Internet” has been used to analyze students’ attitudes towards internet.

-Cox (2008: 1): The purpose of the study is to examine students’ attitudes toward the use of technology in higher and adult education courses at the University of Memphis, Tennessee and to determine if those attitudes differ based on the students’ individual learning styles. The participants have been enrolled in Higher and Adult Education courses. The ANOVA results have showed no significant findings, which demonstrate that in the population of the study there is no relationship existed between attitude toward using technology and learning style.

-Inan, and Ozdemir (Unpublished study: 1): Pre-service teacher education programs in Turkey have gradually taken on the task of preparing future educator to teach in technology classrooms. The research studies the pre-service teachers’ attitude toward learning with computers.

-Isman (2004: 2): The study is designed to examine students’ attitudes towards internet and to realize their tendencies based on gender, education level of parents, having computers and internet connections at home, and students’ positions according to the internet education. The population under investigation includes graduate and postgraduate students. A questionnaire has been used to analyze students’ attitudes towards internet.

-Koszalka (2001: 1): Although of the availability of internet connections in K-12 classrooms is increasing, yet the use of such resources continues to be low. One explanation may be teachers’ attitudes toward the use of web resources due to lack of

opportunities for teacher to collaborate on integrating web resources into classroom practices. The hypothesis tested is that teachers who have discussed how to use web resources during computer-mediated communications have higher attitudes to use web resources in their classrooms than teachers who have not. The results have demonstrated that teachers who have participated in discussions have had higher attitude scores toward the use of computers.

The researcher has decided to choose the university-level students' as they are supposed to be qualified to be future teachers. She has tried to improve and examine the students' attitudes towards using computers and internet after exposing them to the use of computers through teaching.

Methodology of the study

The classroom-based research is a product of an online course with Oregon University. The first step for getting the course ready is to supply a computer lab. The researcher could establish a simple computer lab.

Since many of the target students have complained technophobia because they have had no previous experience in using computers, the researcher has to illuminate the importance of using computers in learning and to assure her students about that the experience would not score their final results.

The procedures

The researcher has taken the experimental-one group design of a pre-scale and post-scale thinking it is suitable for the current research purpose and hypothesis. One group has been trained how to type and use computers in order to be ready for receiving duties.

The research sample

The research has been applied on second year students of English Department, College of Education for Women, Baghdad University, for the second term of the academic year 2008-2009. The number of the population is thirty-six.

The research tools

After reviewing some literature and scales concerning the current research, an "Attitude Scale towards Using Computers" has been prepared in advance. The number of the items has been 23 before they have been given to a jury of experts to judge its validity for the proposed purpose. The final scale items have become 20. Fourteen of the items measure the cognitive and emotional attitudes, seven for each. Six items measure the behavioral attitudes. All items have been divided into positive and negative ones.

Method

- The researcher has applied the "Attitude Scale towards Using Computers" to measure the students' attitudes at the beginning of the experiment, and assigned a score for each item.
- The first two weeks are introductory. The students are only asked to type in order to be familiar with using the keyboard and mouse.
- The experiment has been applied through teaching the students comprehension using computers for ten weeks; two hours per week. Two major types of teaching have been adopted,
 - a. textbook-dependent,

b. textbook-independent.

The students have been asked to read passages from their prescribed textbook, explain and answer the comprehension questions. They have also been asked to choose optional passages from other books and sites, explain and answer the comprehension questions. Every student has been asked to type her summary and comment on the explained passage.

- Since there is no internet connection in the classroom, the researcher has to book some computers in the college internet café so that to encourage the students joining the internet. Each student has been asked to create her own e-mail.
- The students have been shown some important sites specialized in reading and listening comprehension in order to know the importance of using them to enhance their comprehension skills of listening and reading, and then to improve their productive skills of speaking and writing.
- Two online classes have been created on www.nicenet.org with the keys Y263428Q95 and M264225F66. The objective of the online classes is to introduce the students to interacting with the teacher and classmates.
- The students have also been asked to connect to some useful selected websites such as www.trainyouraccent.com and Interesting Things for ESL Students where they could practice language learning autonomously. Next, they have been asked to write their summaries and comments on what they have practiced on the nicenet classes.
- The teacher's role is to direct the students to the right way of searching and encourage them to continue contacting through the site.
- No marks have been scored for the summaries and comments being correct or incorrect. The students could practice the four skills actively. They could practice listening to native speakers, reading passages, writing summaries on the site and speaking through the oral discussion inside the classroom.
- The students' attitudes have been measured again at the end of the course, giving each student three scores: one is for the behavioral attitude, another is for the cognitive attitude and the last one is for the emotional attitude.

Analysis and Results

The students' attitudes development has been measured by accounting the difference between the scores of the pre-scale and post-scale.

The following table shows the statistical analysis techniques and results: 'degree of freedom (df), the mean (X), standard deviation (std. dev.) and T. test (T)' to show if there are any significant differences (sig) between the pre-scale and post-scale concerning the cognitive, emotional and behavioral attitudes toward using computers in learning.

- The mean score of the cognitive attitudes pre-scale is (30.39) whereas it is (32.58) in the post-scale. The T. test calculated is (8.41) at the level of significance (0.01).
- The mean score of the emotional attitudes pre-scale is (27.47), whereas it is (30.19) in the post-scale. The T. test calculated is (8.92) at the level of significance (0.01).
- The mean score of the behavioral attitudes pre-scale is (22.33), whereas it is (25.28) in the post-scale. The T. test calculated is (8.11) at the level of significance (0.01).

- The mean score of the total attitudes pre-scale is (80.19), whereas it is (88.06) in the post-scale. The T. test calculated is (11.72) at the level of significance (0.01).

Paired Sample Test

Component	Df	pretest		Posttest		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Cognitive	35	30.39	3.90	32.58	3.33	8.41	0.01
Emotional	35	27.47	4.43	30.19	4.25	8.92	0.01
Behavioral	35	22.33	3.89	25.28	3.75	8.11	0.01
Total	35	80.19	10.51	88.06	9.42	11.72	0.01

The results show the effective role of the teaching experiment on improving the attitudes toward learning comprehension using computers. The results discover significance at 0.01; that means the program is successful.

The cognitive and emotional attitudes measurement clearly show that they are high in the pre-scale, while the behavioral attitudes measurement is low. This means that though the students' knowledge of the importance of computer usage in learning, they could not practically use it. Then, the table shows that the experiment has its effective role in increasing the behavioral results.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher emphasizes the importance of exposure to develop the students' attitudes toward learning with computers. The study shows that though the students' high emotional and cognitive attitudes, their behavioral attitudes are low before the experiment starting. But, the results show that the cognitive, emotional and behavioral attitudes scores have increased after the students' exposure to computer using.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends:

1. the establishment of a computer lab with internet connection.
2. extending the teaching of computer for at least two years.
3. establishing a special active site for the English Department.
4. allowing students to contact with their teachers through the internet.
5. directing the students to the specialized sites to use them as references.

Suggestions for further reading

In the light of the obtained results of the current research, the researcher has suggested the following:

1. Similar studies to be experimented with the other subjects.
2. Summarizing the lectures, showing them on powerpoint and copying them on CDs for the students.
3. Asking the students to do their homework with the help of the internet.

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أثر تعلم اللغة باستخدام الحاسوب في اتجاهات الطالبات نحو الأستيعاب

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قسم اللغة الانكليزية – كلية التربية للبنات

الخلاصة:

ان هذه الدراسة هي نتاج دورة أون لاين مع جامعة أوريجون . انها تسعى الى تطوير اتجاهات الطلبة نحو استخدام الحاسوب في التعلم للحصول على فوائد تعلم اللغة من خلال الحاسوب وفوائد التعلم الذاتي . اعتمدت الباحثة على نظام المجموعة الواحدة للقياس القبلي والبعدي لقياس تأثير التعرض لأستخدام الحاسوب.