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## THE EFFECTS OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH INSTRUCTIONS ON THE PROFICIENCY OF LISTENING SKILLS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

**Prof. Dr. R. Shanmugayogini**

Professor in English

Department of English Language Teaching

University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka



**Shanmugayogini**

### Abstract

Theories of language learning emphasize on the natural learning process of a second language(L<sub>2</sub>) which increases the proficiency level in the target language. Various methods and modes of teaching and learning L<sub>2</sub> have been introduced to attain the target of acquiring full proficiency in L<sub>2</sub> as that of a native language speaker. A few decades ago Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was introduced. Even though CALL inspired and motivated the L<sub>2</sub> teachers and learners; thus far the L<sub>2</sub> proficiency level has not improved remarkably in majority of L<sub>2</sub> learners. This paper emerges as an experimental study introducing and incorporating instructions along with the CALL mode named as CALLI. The objective of the study is to find out the effects of CALLI on the proficiency level of the participants in L<sub>2</sub> listening skills. Seventy-five tertiary level students were taken as sample for the study. A pre- test was conducted to group them according to their proficiency in listening skills. Forty-five students who obtained lower than 45 marks in the pre -test were named as 'A' and considered as controlled group. Thirty students who got above 45 marks were considered as the experimental group and named as group 'B'. The participants followed CALL based listening lessons for three months. At the same time the experimental group was taught through the CALLI mode. After three months a common listening test was conducted for both the groups. Qualitative and quantitative mixed methodology was utilized for the study. The data were collected based on the pre and post listening tests through the CALL and CALLI modes of learning. A questionnaire administered to participants, relevant literature and interviews with the teachers were utilized as data for the study. The analysis of data reveals the fact that the CALLI mode of teaching and learning the listening skills has a positive effect on the proficiency in L<sub>2</sub> listening skills. The study has an implication of introducing and incorporating the CALLI mode for tertiary level learners for all the four language skills.

**Keywords:** CALL , Second Language Learning, listening skills, Tertiary level , CALLI

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### Introduction

English is taught and learnt as a second language from the primary to the tertiary levels in Sri Lanka. All four skills are taught and tested. The

traditional face to face mode of teaching is mainly followed in schools. In Sri Lanka it is only a decade ago that the Advanced Technical Colleges and Universities have installed computer networked

classrooms and have introduced the computer assisted language learning-CALL.

CALL is an abbreviation of computer assisted language learning. Computer Assisted Language Learning was introduced in the late 1980s in the European and other developed countries. It inspired both the teachers and learners. The teachers and learners have to learn not only the subject but the technology as well. Due to the lack of facilities and lack of computer skills and expertise in the technology the universities and other tertiary level Institutes could use CALL mode a decade ago in Sri Lanka.

Listening is the prime skill to develop the proficiency in other three skills. The second language learners are unable to obtain high proficiency in the target language due to various internal and external factors. Listening and comprehending a language depends on the individuals' familiarity with the linguistic elements of the target language. Depending on the educational and home L<sub>2</sub> speaking environment and backgrounds the learner either gets or not get exposure to the target language.

### **Research problem**

The teachers and learners who were motivated to use the CALL mode have now found that teaching and learning through the CALL mode is deficient in promoting high proficiency in the language skills in the learners. It has become a routine and mechanical learning and more student centered. The CALL mode of teaching and learning has not brought the full benefit as it was aimed. The research explores whether providing instructions along with CALL mode could increase proficiency in listening skills.

### **Literature Review**

Many scholars have undertaken researches on listening skills. Each researcher postulated his theory or placed his argument for the cause for poor proficiency in listening comprehension based on their researches. Blasco, M. J. (2005) has looked at highly proficient L<sub>2</sub> learners and found that they had had intensive L<sub>2</sub> training, were highly motivated, and constantly and massively exposed to L<sub>2</sub> input. Cutler

(2000/01) found that the mother tongue phonological system has an effect on the ability to process aural L<sub>2</sub>. She suggests that intensive listening training would overcome L<sub>1</sub> influence on L<sub>2</sub> processing. Pérez Basanta (2007) believed in training the L<sub>2</sub> learners by using pronunciation training materials. Gilbert (1994) expressed that listening and speaking are interrelated and each skill has an effect on the other reciprocally. Pérez Basanta (2000a) found that the participants in his research had less exposure to the target language and therefore their proficiency in listening was poor. Warschauer and Healey, expressed that by integrating technology more fully into the language learning process would integrate various skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing."

### **Objective**

The objective of the study is to find out the effects of CALLI on the proficiency level on the participants in L<sub>2</sub> listening skills and to explore the deficiencies in learning through the CALL and to suggest a new mode CALLI, which incorporates instructions while learning through CALL mode.

### **Methodology**

Seventy-five students from the tertiary level were taken as sample for the study. At the beginning of the study, a test on listening skill was conducted to find the proficiency in listening skills. Forty five participants obtained less than 44% and thirty students obtained between 45% -55%. The participants were grouped based on their proficiency. Forty-five students who obtained less than 45 % marks were grouped as controlled group and named as B. The thirty students who showed better proficiency were grouped as A and considered as experimental group. The research was conducted for three months. All the participants followed the listening skills classes through the CALL mode. The experimental group was taught through the CALLI mode. A questionnaire was circulated to the participants to find their views on the impact of CALL and CALLI modes of learning L<sub>2</sub>. Teachers were interviewed. Their observation in the classroom, participants' performances in the pre and post tests and relevant literature were taken as data for the study.

**Analysis****The pre and post tests**

The pre- test conducted at the beginning revealed the participants' proficiency levels in listening skills. The thirty participants who performed better than the rest were selected as experimental group and named as Group A and the rest were grouped as B and considered as controlled group. All the participants followed the listening lessons through CALL mode for three months. Extra listening lessons based on the CALLI mode was conducted for the experimental group. That is the group B was given instructions along with CALL mode. After three months a common post listening test was conducted. The participants' performances were compared. Group A showed improvement in their proficiency in listening skills by scoring higher marks in the post test when compared to their performance in the pre- test. Whereas the post -test performances of group B did not show any remarkable changes. In the post -test twenty-two students scored more than sixty and others scored between fifty to sixty marks. This reveals the fact that the CALLI mode of learning has increased the experimental group's proficiency in listening skills.

**Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was circulated to the participants. All the participants expressed their views on learning through face to face, CALL and CALLI modes. 75% of the participants preferred the CALLI mode. 5% preferred the face to face and 20% preferred the CALL mode. Those who preferred the face to face expressed that they need computer skills in order to learn L<sub>2</sub> in the CALL or CALLI modes. They are slow in picking up the technology and other skills. Twenty percent of the participants expressed as they are used to the CALL mode they are very much comfortable in learning listening skills through that mode. Seventy five percent of the participants preferred the CALLI mode. They stated that the instructions in the listening soft wear is very limited. They expressed that the instructions could be given whenever they encounter problems in learning, practicing and doing listening tasks. They felt incorporating instructions while preparing soft wares on listening depending on the proficiency

levels of the target group will enable them to learn listening comprehension successfully. They expressed that through the CALLI mode they were able to clear their grammar, spelling and pronunciation problems which they encountered. In the CALLI mode the teacher's instructions and explanations about the rules of grammar, spelling and pronunciation of the target language was very helpful in not repeating the same mistakes and errors. The questionnaire survey reveals the fact that the CALLI mode has provided more instructions which guided the participants to choose texts relevant to their proficiency levels, field of study and improved proficiency in listening and other skills too.

**Interview**

In the interview with the teachers they disclosed the deficiencies in the face to face and CALLI modes. They insisted the fact that teaching listening should be done through CALLI mode. They stated that they had to read the texts for the students while they were teaching through the face to face mode. They expressed that at the beginning the CALL mode facilitated both the students and teachers to learn and teach listening. the CALLI mode is found to be a very successful. They stated that they found that by incorporating more and more instructions through the CALL mode their vocabulary knowledge improved which was a barrier in understanding the text and the instructions. The teachers through this study and the experimenting with the target group found by incorporating instructions with the CALLI mode the target group was facilitated obtain better proficiency in the listening skills.

**Conclusion**

The study discloses the fact that the learners should be internally motivated to listen and comprehend to complete various activities such as listen and speak, listen and write and to listen and repeat the words and start to read. The four language skills are interconnected and interdependent. It was found that the learners were able to get familiarized to the phonemic elements and follow correct pronunciation and to understand the speech of a native speaker through the CALLI mode experimented in this study. The mode enabled

the target group to comprehend the sound patterns, tone and pronunciation and different accents of the target language in different situations. The instructions incorporated through the CALLI mode has facilitated the learner to listen carefully and assisted to cope up with the speed in which the person speaks. From this study is recommended that the teachers should prepare soft wares based on the curricula and on the students' levels on listening skills and the success of CALLI depends on the learners' and the teachers' perceptions and how the curricula and lessons are integrated into the existing system.

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