

Bridging the Gap Between ESL and EFL: Using Computer Assisted Language Learning as a Medium.

SAAD AL-HASHASH
King Saud University, Riyadh

1. INTRODUCTION

As Warschauer and Healey (1998) point out, that computers have been used for language teaching since the 1960. However, the decision to integrate Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) into language study programs goes beyond simply purchasing equipments and software and making them available to instructors and students. Nevertheless, computers and the Internet are so widespread today that one feels outdated if not using them. The use of technology in EFL setting has to be taken as a natural development in the field and the EFL community should look at the advantages that CALL brings to their students, especially in bringing “life” to the EFL classroom. “Life” here means using the foreign language for real interaction, and learning it for communicative purposes. Using CALL in EFL setting allows for a combination of sound, graphics, text, and video to be presented in one programme, which facilitates efforts to teach all four language skills by computer. The advent of the Internet, however, expanded the use of computers as tools for information processing as well as for simple communication-either synchronous (e.g. chatting and conferencing) or asynchronous (e.g. email messages and bulletin boards). Synchronous communication is achieved through the use of such programs as Daedalus or CommonSpace, via local area networks (LANs), or with Internet-oriented programs such as Internet Relay Chat (IRC), MSN Messenger, PalTalk, and Freetel (Sullivan 1998; Warchauer and Healey 1998 and others). The main (out-of thumb) advantage of applying CALL in EFL setting is to establish the link between the EFL learners and their counterparts in English speaking countries, and put them in a close proficiency level. It’s my objective in this paper, however, to explore the possibilities that CALL may provide in bridging the gap