

The Impacts of Chatting as One of the CALL-Based Activities on Adults' Speaking Ability

Hooshang Khoshima

Chabahar Maritime University, Iran

Sakineh Khazayi *

Chabahar Maritime University, Iran

Abstract

This study aims to address the impacts of chatting as one of the CALL-based activities on adults' speaking ability. Speaking is an important skill in second language learning, it needs to be taken into account by language teachers and learners. This ability involves the improvement of a specific kind of communicative skill and language learners need to produce their oral productions and speaking skill in communicative situations. To meet the objective, this study attempts to apply chatting in cyberspaces (telegram) to measure the promotion of adults' speaking skill. To carry out the project, 20 high school students were selected from Chabahar, Iran. A proficiency test was administered to evaluate their general English knowledge. Then, a FCE speaking test was taken as a pre-test. During treatment time, the participants used chatting in telegram as their major activity. This process was run for three months. After the course, a post-test was conducted. Finally, the obtained data was analyzed in SPSS. Findings revealed that chatting as one of the CALL-based activities has a significant effect on adults' speaking ability.

Key words: CALL, speaking ability, chatting, proficiency test

INTRODUCTION

Computer-Assisted-Language Learning (CALL) is a novel branch of applied linguistics (Beatty, 2010, p. 2). According to Davies (2006) the origin of CALL is traced back to early experiments in 1960s. Until the late 1970s, computer programs developed and micro-computers emerged. Consequently, applying CALL projects was confined mainly to universities (Beatty, 2010, p. 460).

Kumaravadivelu (2008) defined four premises for language learning theory of learning-centered methods, firstly, "language development was incidental, not intentional", secondly, "language development was comprehension based, not production based", thirdly, "language development was meaning focused, not form focused", and finally, "language development was cyclical and parallel, not sequential and additive". The first two premises were related to this study. He expressed in the context of second language

development, the process of incidental learning involved picking up target language words and structures by engaging in a variety of communicative activities. Kumaravadivelu continued that the second mentioned premise emphasized comprehension over production at least in the initial stages of second language learning. As he indicated a major handicap for some language learners was that speaking in public, therefore the learners had to speak only when felt ready to do (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 137). As Beatty (2010) pointed out the major benefit of collaborative learning at the computer was the way it revealed information and ideas not only to the Learners' collaborative partners but also to the learners themselves. Therefore, the collaborative learning was beneficial to exchange learner's information (Beatty, 2010, p. 122).

In fact, many researchers and scholars suggested and employed many approaches to improve the proficiency level of speaking as one of the basic skills in communication. Most EFL learners attended English courses with the main goal of speaking in a real situation to fulfill cultural, academic, business, etc. To meet these objectives, this study aimed to utilize chatting in cyberspaces as a technological approach in task-based approach.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Computer and internet technology are unavoidable in education methodology. Still, the main roll in teaching belongs to learners. The new technology helps teachers especially language teachers and it presents new possibilities of a creative work and a two-way communication, and furthermore offers the teachers with a challenge to create an active participation of all language learners. CALL has grown at a crossroad of technology and language learning to respond to human needs industrial and educational developments, cultural demands, business and entertainment. Computers and web technology can be used for teaching different topics such as math, informatics, biology, chemistry, foreign language learning, etc.

Baradaran and Khalili (2009) conducted a study which investigated the impacts of online chatting on oral proficiency. To obtain the purpose, they selected 52 junior English Translation students from Islamic Azad University, Gha'emshahr Branch. The sample included female and male students with the age range of 20-35. The participants were selected in a proficiency test by using Nelson general English Proficiency Tests. This test was administered for homogenizing the students regarding their proficiency level. To homogenize the participants in terms of their oral fluency, an oral interview based on the speaking module of the IELTS test was applied. The participants' speeches were recorded during the interview. There were two equal groups: experimental and control groups. Then, to make sure both groups were homogenous a t-test were run. Both groups had the same course book: the third volume of Interchange. The 90 minutes of each class period was divided into two parts: at the first 60 minutes, both groups were exactly in the same manner. For the next 30 minutes, in the control group, practicing speaking which focused on the worked topics. The teacher supervised the students if necessary, and corrected only their universal errors, since this study was

fluency based. In the experimental group, however, the class session ended with 60 minutes at the university and the students had to participate the next 30 minutes of the period, the night of their class at home in an Internet chat room that was introduced them, in advance. Chat rooms were the real classrooms where participants were online and gathered there in order to discuss about worked lesson in oral or written form. Each participant was free to choose a nickname as his/her ID and only the teacher knew which ID belonged to whom. This treatment extended for 20 sessions. Finally, another interview was taken as the oral fluency post-test. According to the obtained results, the authors observed that online chatting had a significant effect on oral proficiency of the junior English Translation students.

Advantages of Computer Assisted Language Learning

Barson and Debski (1996) believed there was a gradual development for computer assisted language learning (CALL); it was known three different phases: *behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL, integrative CALL*" (Barson & Debski, 1996, as cited in Dina & Ciornei, 2013, p. 249).

Behavioristic CALL – Advantages

The first phase was conceived and carried out in the second half of the 20th century. Then the computers became tools to deliver the instructional materials to students. The computer role was that of a *tutor*, and the materials delivered were repetitive language drills, as described by Taylor in 1980 vocabulary, grammar and translation tests. Nowadays, repetitive language drills and practice offer a series of advantages:

- providing necessary language learning materials to acquire a language;
- giving students opportunities to access the language learning materials over and over and offering ideal, immediate and non-judgmental feed-back to master a language every time;
- Presenting the language learning materials to the students, without time keeping and deadlines, offering them the opportunity to study in their own rhythm (Barson& Debski, 1996, as cited in Dina & Ciornei, 2013, p. 249).

Communicative CALL – Advantages

There was a second phase of CALL activities that was focused on communicative aspect of language and it became popular between 1970s and 1980s. There were some programs that offered practice of skills in a format whose basic target was attained by playing computer games. Taylor and Perez (1989) introduced a CALL approach used for communicative activities and this approach involved *computer as stimulus*. The purpose of this CALL activity was based on the students' conversation, written tasks, or critical thinking. The main purpose of the current study was concentrated on this phase of CALL (Barson & Debski, 1996, as cited in Dina & Ciornei, 2013, p. 249).

Integrative CALL – Advantages

The third and current phase of CALL was based on the technological developments of multimedia computers and World Wide Web. The Internet provided a lot of advantages for language learning and teaching. It was included immediate access to connect with the world, a useful tool to create authentic learning environment, capability to combine and integrate skills in a single activity and a motivating tool to access a lot of funny games and communicative activities. Thus, it reduced learning stress and anxiety, as they provide repeated lessons as often as necessary. It was also an interactive tool to offer the students a chance to create their own materials and share them with other students around the world and also gave them the opportunity to communicate with native speakers, a chance for better understanding and learning a language. The next advantage was that the internet was a resourceful tool because of constant and easy access to a lot of materials, such as: newspapers, magazine articles, movie reviews and book excerpts. It was also an educational tool because it offered students the possibility to participate in activities beyond classroom in the target language, exchanged messages with native speakers and interacted in the target language.

CALL and Learners' Motivation

It can be said that arousal and affect are essential for successful language learning. The main objective for language teachers were to provoke learners' curiosity, attention, and interest and to provide tasks or activities which frequently engage learners. Dornyei (2001) believes that learner cooperation has direct effect on motivation. He gave the reason as follow:

- First, cooperation fosters class group cohesiveness. When students work together, they share common goals and create a feeling of supportiveness and cordiality. This would happen without considering each other's ethnic and cultural differences.
- Second, cooperative activities in comparison to individual work allow more expectancy of success.
- Third, cooperative situations generally show positive emotional tone, that is, learners feel less stress and anxiety than other learning situations.
- Forth, in cooperative tasks when learners complete a task together by sharing their own experiences and knowledge, sense of satisfaction would increase dramatically.
- Lastly, learners working in group master their cooperative abilities like being autonomous with less supervision of the teacher, thus their autonomy will be the most powerful contributor of their motivation.

METHOD

Participants

This experimental study included 20 high school students from Chabahar and Zahedan, Iran and their age range was 17 to 25 years old. All of them were female and non-native speakers. A Nelson English Language Test was given to evaluate their proficiency. According to the test, the participants were elementary level. Cell phone was available for the learners. They had enough experience to use cyberspaces (Telegram), therefore, they did not need to be guided to use cellphones and Telegram.

Instruments

The study employed some instruments to collect valid data in answering the research questions which were Nelson English Language Tests provided in Fowler and Coe (2004) and Cambridge FCE speaking Tests, because the reliability and validity of both tests were already established through their lifelong credit. The participants were high school students who applied Pre-university English book by Birjandy, AnaniSarab and Samimi (2011). Cell phones, laptop, speakers and voice recorders were utilized. Finally, SPSS version 23rd was used to analyze data.

Procedures

During the treatment for this group, they chatted in English for half of an hour twice a week as well as doing the existing tasks in their text books which was meaning-based. After their proficiency test, a pre-test was administered by FCE speaking tests. Then, some instructional activities or techniques were employed by the teacher. In every session, after reviewing previous materials, a new part has been thought. In teaching this part, the teacher applied some activities, techniques and technologies.

First of all, to teach the new words and concepts the teacher asked learners' opinions about the intended subject. Each of them had own ideas and explained the ideas in their words. For example, to describe a plan for daily exercise, a learner gave a word related to the subject like 'flexibility' and another one said a different word like 'joint'. The teacher wrote the words on the board by drawing a tree diagram. While they mentioned their ideas, the teacher used the words in a related structure to make a sentence. She asked the learners to repeat the sentences. After a while, they applied new words in a new structured sentence. All the learners knew how to use cellphones and chatting in cyberspaces. Therefore, they did not need to be guided to use cellphones and online chatting. In every session of online chatting, they had a subject related to materials that had been thought and the learners chatted regarding to the subject. In the chatting sessions, the teacher thought an expression and the learners used them in their conversations. In the next classroom session, they were doing the exercises of each unit and solved their problems related to the unit. During doing the exercises, they applied English language instead of their mother tongue. In the whole phases of instruction, the role of the teacher was only facilitator that aided students. This process took three months.

After three months, FCE speaking tests as the post-test were administered to evaluate the effects of the treatment on the participants' performance. It is worthy to note that the collected data was scored by three raters. To analyze the obtained data, correlations and Compare Means entries of SPSS was used. First, a correlation was calculated for pre-test and post-test scores of two groups. Then, to compare the Pre- and post-tests of each experimental group, paired sample t-test was applied. Finally, Independent sample t-test was applied to compare the mean scores of participants' performance at the pre- and post-tests of two groups.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates the correlation of the scores which were given by the raters. The researcher decides to correlate the scores in adults' pre-test scores to explore the association between the scores and to assess reliability and validity of scales.

Table 1. Inter-rater Reliability of the Group Pre-test Scores

		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.451*	-.555*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.046	.011
	N	20	20	20
Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	.451*	1	-.479*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046		.033
	N	20	20	20
Rater 3	Pearson Correlation	-.555*	-.479*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.033	
	N	20	20	20

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between the raters is significant at the 0.05 level. As the results of the table, firstly, the correlation between the rater 1 and the rater 2 ($r = 0.45$, $p < .05$, $0.046 < .05$). Hence, there is a positive, significant and strong relationship between the rater 1 and the rater 2. Secondly, the correlation between the rater1 and the rater 3 is ($r = -0.55$, $p < .05$, $0.01 < .05$). Therefore, there is significant and strong relationship between the rater 1 and the rater 3. Lastly, the correlation between the rater 2 and the rater 3 is ($r = -0.47$, $p < .05$, $0.03 < .05$). Consequently, the rater 2 and the rater 3 are correlated as well. In table 2 and 3, the final results of the study are demonstrated. To calculate the obtained data, descriptive statistics and paired samples t-test are utilized. Accordingly, the three raters converge in scoring.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the results of group speaking

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Adult's Pre-test	14.36	20	.50	.11
	Adult's Post-test	16.72	20	1.32	.29

Table 3. Paired sample t-test results for pre- and post-test scores

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Adult's Pre-test - Adult's Post-test	-2.36	1.28	.288	-2.96	-1.75	-8.19	19	.000

Table 2 and 3 show the results of the pre- and post-test for the adult's group. The evaluated speaking performance development mean and standard deviation of the participants in pre-test equaled 14.36 and 0.50, respectively and the computed speaking performance development mean and standard deviation of the participants in post-test equaled 16.72, and 1.32, respectively. An inspection of the mean scores display that there was a considerable difference between pre-test and post-test in terms of overall speaking performance. Therefore, speaking proficiency is improved after applying chatting in cyberspaces as treatment. Moreover, the paired samples *t*-test analysis showed *p* value is less than 0.05 ($0.00 < 0.05$) which indicates that the adult group statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test on speaking performances. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, using chatting as one of the CALL-based activities has no significant effect on adults' speaking ability was rejected.

Calculating the Effect Size for Participants' Performance in Paired-Samples *t*-test

Although the obtained results stated that there is a significant difference between the two sets of scores (pre- and post-test), they do not demonstrate much about the magnitude of the interference's effect. One of the most commonly way to calculating effect size is eta squared. Hence, by using the following procedure and formula the purpose is dealt with:

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N - 1)}$$

According to the table 4.9, *t*- value is -8.19 and *N*- value is 20, so;

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{(-8.19)^2}{-8.19^2 + (20 - 1)}$$

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{(-8.19)^2}{-8.19^2 + (20 - 1)}$$

$$\text{Eta squared} = 0.77$$

The values suggest 0.01= small effect, 0.06= moderate effect and 0.14= large effect. As a result of given eta squared value of 0.77, it can be concluded that there is a large effect with a substantial difference between pre-test and post-test scores which was taken

after using online chatting in cyberspaces for adult participants (Cohen, 1988, as cited in Pallant, 2010, p. 247).

CONCLUSION

Language learning is a complex process of developing four primary skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. To become a proficient user of a language, the language learner should achieve proficiency in all of these skills. Accordingly, this approach is a beneficial and helpful one for EFL learners especially for those who have difficulties to produce their language productions in public and real situations. According to the findings, the results are in line with previous studies such as Baradaran and Khalili (2009) that was mentioned in review of literature. This approach suggests for high school text books, teachers, supervisors and writers as an additional approach to improve language learners' speaking ability.

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