

## **Attitudes and Motivation of Learners of French as a Second Language towards Computer Assisted Language Learning**

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on computer assisted language learning and the attitude of the learners who are enrolled in French department at Uludag University. A total of 42 learners in French programme at Uludag University participated in the study as subjects. They were given questionnaire in pre-test and post-test at the beginning of the academic period and three months later to observe whether there were any changes in their attitude towards computer assisted learning. The data were collected in the 2009-2010 education-instruction year. The data obtained in the study was analysed using the SPSS statistics computer programme. It was also found out that the CALL method supported with the language learning programme was more effective in positive development of achievement levels of learners. The results exposed that there occurred positive changes in the attitudes of the subjects towards computer assisted language learning during three months. Although most learners accept changes in teaching delivery and welcome the enrichment provided by new educational tools, some refuse them. Differences in learning styles exist, and will continue to exist, and cannot be dismissed.

**Key words:** Computer Assisted Language Learning, French foreign language teaching, attitude, computer, learner, test, assessment.

### **Introduction**

Recently, computers have become so widespread in schools and homes and their uses have expanded so dramatically that the majority of language teachers must now begin to think about the implications of computers for language learning. With technological developments human life is getting easier day by day. Computers are among the greatest devices presented us by technology. With the introduction of computers in education, there seemed important changes in teaching and learning method. In recent years, the rapid evolution of information and communication technology (ICT) has made great changes in societies and education. The Internet, particularly, has become a useful tool for communication, a venue for experiencing different cultures and a mediator in diverse political, social and economical situations. The teacher got the role of being a facilitator rather than being authority. When the modern education conception is examined carefully, it can be seen that implementation of computers in foreign language education and learner centred approach are practically at the same time. This research aims to find out the changes in the attitudes of the learners in French programme at Uludag University towards computer assisted language learning. Are there any differences between the attitudes of the learners who have participated in French Programme in their previous life and after three month exposure process to computer assisted language learning?

A student's attitude and motivation has frequently been reported to be the most critical factor for success within computer-assisted language learning (CALL) environments (Brandl, 2002). Motivation, according to Winne and Marx (1989), is both a condition for, and a result of, effective instruction. Based on these claims, it is plausible to speculate that students' motivation plays an important role in successful CALL implementation and that, if used effectively, the CALL environment can enhance students' motivation to learn a foreign language. This study investigated the role of motivation and attitudes on student French foreign learning in an online course context. It also examined how this new foreign learning environment affected students' attitudes and motivation, and how this, in turn, affected students' foreign learning.

There are similar definitions of computer assisted language learning. CALL is defined as a method to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation reinforcement and assessment of material to be learned including a substantial interactive element. Most FLT specialists agree that

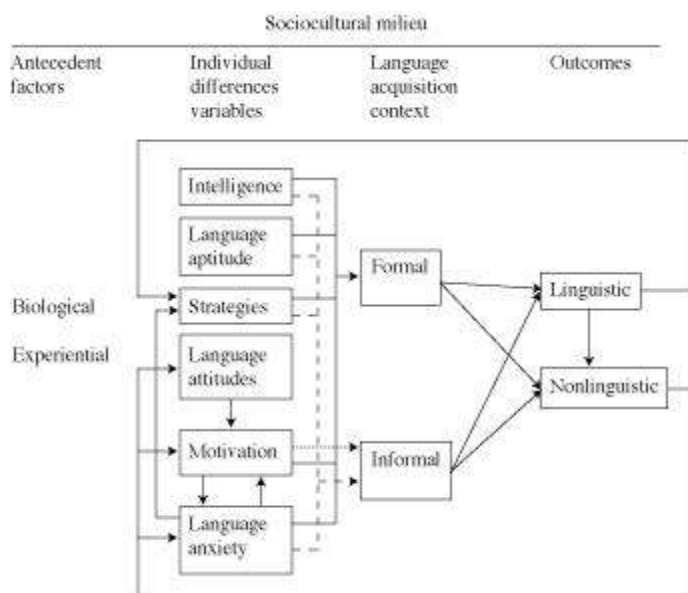
CALL is a tool which helps teachers to facilitate language learning process. They think that CALL can be used to reinforce what has been learned in the classrooms. It might also be used as an alternative help for the learners. Although most research (Meskill, 1996), suggests that comprehension is aided by the conjunction of aural/visual processing if there is congruence between the verbal and visual elements, some students may experience (especially in a non-native language) perceptual/cognitive overload and feel that information in ready-made multimedia lectures escapes them (Burston & Monville-Burston, 1996; (Monville)-Burston, 1997) )

There is no doubt that CALL has developed a lot since the day it was introduced to education field. Recently teachers have started to consider the use of computers as an indispensable part of foreign language teaching and learning process. Due to technological advancement, computer has the potential part of foreign language teaching and learning. Communicative CALL gained praise among educationalists and communicative CALL is largely based on communicative method in language learning. In this approach it is argued that computer based exercises should focus more on using forms. There are many explications suggesting the importance of student-student interaction in communicative CALL among French foreign language specialists. In communicative CALL the focus shouldn't be on what students do with the computer but rather what they do with each other while working at the computer.

### Gardner's Socio-educational Model of Foreign Language Learning (FLL)

The role of foreign learning motivation has been intensively studied by social psychologists in Canada, where French and English are the two official languages. Gardner (1985) hypothesized that foreign language learners with positive attitudes toward the target culture and people will learn the target language more effectively than those who do not have such positive attitudes. In their earlier studies, Gardner and Lambert (1959) found that aptitude and motivation were the two factors most strongly associated with learners' second language achievement. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) drew together the findings from many studies over several decades and developed Gardner's "socio-educational model of FLL" (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Representation of Socio-educational Model of SLA (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993)



Proponents of this model of SLA (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992, 1993) claim that individual-difference variables interact with both formal and informal language acquisition contexts and influence both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993, p. 9) argue that this model shows the importance of what takes place in the learning contexts: "Teachers, instructional aids, curricula, and the like clearly have an effect on what is learned and how students react to the experience." The model also predicts that student' linguistic

outcomes and affects their non-linguistic outcomes and that both types of outcomes will have an influence on individual-difference variables including language attitudes and motivation.

### **The role of the computer in French Foreign Language (FFL)**

There are diverse opinions among language specialists about the role of computer and the teacher in CALL programmes. The difference between computer as a tutor and computer as instrument is the most ordinary discussion in the field. When the character of CALL is examined carefully, it can be easily recognised that the view of computer as instrument became more prevalent with the arrival of the multimedia computer and internet. From the teacher' position, the computer is totally dependant on the teacher in many ways. It is unable to create educational materials without a human to direct it. The progressive view is that teacher should take a less intrusive role in managing language learning with the arrival of multimedia. Teacher should take the role of facilitator rather than being the unique authority. We can refer to the teacher as a mediator between the computer and learners throughout the learning process, serving the role of keeping things running smoothly.

The computers have some specific advantage as organising of materials, including volume of material and random presentation, scoring and record-keeping, graphics and animation, including allowing student control, recording and storage of learner responses. Certain design issues affect just how interesting the particular tool creates motivation. It must be surely accepted that CALL is a method in which four skills of the target language can be practised effectively. By choosing the correct software programme, both productive and receptive skills can be concentrated. Another advantage of CALL is that target culture could be transmitted to the learners through authentic software programmes.

Computers have a useful contribution to the development of oral skills when they are used wisely. Computer simulations are really motivating for the learners. For example dialogues studies can be done with the help of the movie parts in computers and intonation exercises might be added to these activities.

For listening skills in CALL many techniques can be used to develop listening skills of the learners. By listening to the speakers in software programme without any subtitles, learners will be exposed to natural sounds of the target language. Learners will pay attention to pronunciation of particular words and compare their own pronunciation with native ones.

There are a lot of books and research papers that discuss whether classic class lessons or CALL programmes are more effective in foreign language learning. Several articles have been found which are trying to reflect learners' feedback about CALL. For example the study of Ayres examines learner attitudes towards the use of CALL and their perceived view of its relevancy to their course of study. This study reports whether there was any relation between the perceived usefulness of CALL, and the students' level of computer literacy, language level and the age.

### **Methodology and Subjects of the study**

There are two main purpose of this study. French language programme in French programme at Uludag University is discussed with its main frames and its integration with CALL is focused on. The number of the participants in the study was limited to the number of 4th grade class students. The attitude of the learners towards computer assisted language learning and possible changes in their attitudes towards CALL in a tree month process are examined. For this research, qualitative approach is considered to be the most convenient one because it is based on the idea of making sense of the data. The data collected from the questionnaire were evaluated with qualitative approach; but quantitative approach was also used to count and measure the data in order to analyse the results.

The subjects of this study are the students of French programme at Uludag University during 2009-2010 academic year. It is a well-known reality that questionnaire are used data collection instruments in descriptive studies. To learn the attitudes of the students who are enrolled in French programme at Uludag University towards CALL, a questionnaire was applied to them twice in the format of pre-test and post-test. Questions in both pre-test and post-test were the same so as to observe probable difference in their attitude towards CALL in tree month process. The questionnaire was applied to the subjects in their mother language and a description

about the questionnaire was given to the learners. The questionnaire includes totally 7 questions. In the evaluation phase of the questionnaire, all data were processed in SPSS and analysed using different analysis programmes.

The purpose of the present questionnaire was to learn whether there occurred any changes in the attitudes of Uludag University French Programme learner towards CALL in three-month process. For this motive, the questionnaire was applied to the learners twice to see the possible changes in their attitudes towards CALL.

## **The Results and Analysis of learner's responses**

When we examine the answers of the learners to item 1 "*I believe that using computers in French foreign language learning is a motivation*", they seem really positive in pre-test. The aim of this item is to learn the ideas of the subjects about the motivational aspect of using computers in French foreign language learning. We can say that the learners think that CALL is really a useful method in French foreign language learning. When we look the answers of the learners in both pre-test and post-test, we can say that they believe that using computers in French foreign language learning is a motivation way in many aspects. As well known, learners use computers in many fields of their life; but it is not frequent to use computers in foreign language learning among the learners. In item 2 "*I think that CALL is really an effective method in French foreign language learning*", the learners are relatively optimistic to CALL. The learners had a positive attitude towards computers assisted language learning with arithmetical average more than 85% in both pre-test and post-test. In general, they believe that CALL is an effective approach in French foreign language learning. It can be said that the learners have the assumption that CALL can be an effective method. In item 3 "*I believe that computers will give me indispensable feedback when I make mistake*", the learners had the idea that the computers would not give necessary feedback if they make mistakes and be a good guide for them to reach the right point during their activities in tests. In pre-test, it can be seen that the learners had a negative attitudes towards computers' giving indispensable feedback when they make mistakes during CALL activities. In item 4 "*I think that using computers in French foreign language is more useful than coursebooks in terms of verbal and non-verbal forms*", the aim of this item is to learn the idea of learners on transmission the target culture through computers and comparing the use of computers and coursebooks from this perspective. We can conclude that the learners have positive attitudes towards learning the target culture through computers after three-month CALL exposure. They consider that the computers realize superior work than coursebooks in transmission the target culture while teaching the French foreign language. In item 5 "*The studies in computer assisted French language learning are mainly individual and there is no interaction among the learners*", when the arithmetical average of this item is examined, it can be say that the learners don't consider the studies in CALL boring. They don't agree with the statement in this item. The situation has not changed in post-test. We can say that the learners do not think the studies in CALL boring after three-month. In item 6 "*CALL which is not maintained by classic classroom lessons can cause learners' teamwork skills to disappear*", from the results obtained in pre-test, it can be put forward that the learners disagree with the idea that CALL is not supported by classical classroom lessons can cause students' teamwork skills to disappear. In item 7 "*Can you suggest improvements that could be made to the physical presentation of lectures?*" The aim of the question was to elicit students' comments on various aspects of the physical presentation of lectures which concerned the researchers. Overall it appears that students were more tolerant than would have been expected. Two complained about the occasional flickering of the screen, two about the necessity of having dimmed lights; except for one exception they considered that the larger than necessary capacity of the lecture theatre was not problematic. Learner performance varied widely and showed a not unexpected relation with the responses given for item 7. The most adventurous learner the explorers were the ones who had the most thorough knowledge of the structure and working of the computer. Two felt that sometimes the "technology got in the way" (i.e. created a distance) and did not make the interaction between the teacher and the class as easy as it would have been if the lecture had been delivered in a more conventional fashion.

Informal remarks as well as the end of semester questionnaire seem to indicate that the use of computer by students became more frequent and varied after questionnaire. We believe too that the interview had the effect of convincing the students that they were given special attention.

The learners of the corpus do not agree with the description in this item. They may have thought that activities in computer are not the activities which will cause their teamwork skills to disappear. We can say that majority of the subjects participating in this research are afraid of failure in CALL process.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of our research was to collect experiential data on CALL, its application areas, its advantages and disadvantages. What was investigated was the initial attitudes and reactions of learners after a three-months of use. The present research was contextualized at Uludag University French section. It was aimed to examine the learners' ideas and attitudes towards CALL. The data for the answers of the research questions were obtained from the learners of French section. The instrument to accumulate data was a questionnaire which was applied to the learners in the format of pre-test and post test. The possible needs of the learners for CALL applications were also taken into consideration. It was recognised that three months CALL experience process had a positive consequence in the attitudes of the learners. According to the answers of the learners to the questions in the questionnaire, we can recognize that the learners had favourable attitudes towards computer assisted French language learning. What was obtained was some preliminary indications on the usefulness and efficiency as perceived by learners of a completely new way of delivering a content course in our language departments and an innovating tool aimed at facilitating self-study. Learners with aversions to technology also deserve our attention and support, and need to be provided with learning tools that they prefer. Student attitude to towards educational technology in the classroom was overwhelmingly favourable. In some cases this positive attitude was accompanied by enthusiasm, but an instrumentalist reaction was much more the norm. In general, students felt that, like it or not, they had to adapt to the fact that teaching and learning were bound to become increasingly computer-based. It may be useful through a self-assessment questionnaire, for example to be aware from the beginning of the course of the cognitive and learning differences

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