Learner Attitudes towards CALL Applications at YADIM

Zuhal OKAN & Pınar TORUN

Abstract – The use of educational technology to assist learners in their language studies has become a great concern for scholars over the past decade. YADIM (School for Foreign Languages) at Çukurova University in Turkey has invested substantially to introduce students to computer-based language learning materials and to integrate technology into existing curriculum. This paper reports on attitudes of YADİM students towards the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and their perceptions on CALL's relevancy to their regular classroom work. Surveys and follow-up interviews explored how learners see the role of the instructor and the accessibility of the labs. The paper also looks at how students assess the impact of technology on their language learning process.
Key words: CALL, learner attitudes, educational technology, learning environment.

Özet – Öğrencilerin Bilgisayar Destekli İngilizce Öğretimine Yönelik Tutumları – Eğitim teknolojisinin dil eğitimi alan öğrencilere katkısı uzun bir süredir araştırılmaktadır. Çukurova Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Eğitim Merkezi (YADİM) de teknolojinin uygulanan programla bütünleştirilmesi için çalışmalar yürütmektedir. Bu çalışma, YADİM öğrencilerinin bilgisayar destekli İngilizce öğretimine yönelik tutumlarını araştırmaktadır. Sormaca ve görüşmeler yoluyla öğrencilerin dil laboratuarında yapılan etkinlikler, öğretmenin rolü, laboratuara erişilebilirlik ve dil öğrenimlerine katkısı konularında görüşleri sorulmuştur.
Anahtar kelimeler: Bilgisayar destekli dil öğretimi, öğrenci tutumları, eğitim teknolojisi, öğrenme ortamı.

Introduction

Over the last decade technological advancements have introduced powerful learning environments intended to promote language learning. The combination of text, sound, graphics and animation, in particular, has made educational technology an invaluable source for instructional activities in language classrooms. A growing body of research looks at how CALL is implemented within particular settings (Hulstijn, 1993; Kern, 1995; Chun & Plass, 1996; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996; Laufer & Hill, 2000; Salaberry, 2001; Bordonaro, 2003).

Studies on the effect of CALL have also begun to demonstrate the impact of technology on student achievement and attitudes. Warschauer & Healey state (1998)

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that adding the computer and network to language classrooms have benefits some of which are practice with immediate feedback, the fun factor, variety in the resources available and learning styles, real-life skill-building in computer and network use, opportunities to find, share, and interpret on-line information, and opportunities to contact with native and non-native speakers of the target language.

In addition, the use of technology also seems to influence learners' linguistic skills. Several researchers have reported an improvement in student writing skills through the use of networked computers (Cononelos & Oliva, 1993; Warschauer, 1996). According to Beauvois (1994), students in the networked writing project displayed more fluidity of conversation, more use of complex sentences, and more self-disclosure. She believes that the elimination of strong teacher dominance freed students to express themselves, resulting in a larger quantity and better quality of communication.

Other research also seems to suggest that multimedia information may aid in the comprehension of information by supporting the various cognitive processes involved in comprehension (Chun & Plass, 2000). In a study which examined the effects of multimedia annotations on vocabulary acquisition, Chun and Plass (1996) have found significantly higher retention scores for words annotated with text and pictures as compared to words annotated with text only or text and video combined. According to Chun and Plass, as students simultaneously read the printed word in the target language, hear its digitized sound representation, and see the stationary or video image, they may "develop multiple routes for storing and retrieving vocabulary items or grammatical constructions" (p. 163), thus activating and enhancing the processes for internalizing this information.

Borras (1993), in a study of fifth-semester students of French as a foreign language, has found that subtitling video clips led to a significantly higher level of overall oral communicative performance than did unsubtitled video. Warschauer (1999) presents evidence linking the sensory mode of input with acquisition. He reports noticing common Hawaiian words in oral conversation that he never "caught" before, and attributes this to having noticed them for the first time in computer-mediated writing. Salaberry (2000) supports these findings reporting that a change in developmental stages in the Spanish verbal past ending was identified earlier in CMC, compared to face-to-face interaction.

Several other studies point out that technology often creates a less teacher-centred environment. Teachers, instead of being authority figures, participate in students' learning as facilitators (Kern 1996; Bracey 1988). Stepp-Greany (2002) also cautions that instructors in her study were often confused as to what their role in the TELL (technology-enhanced language learning) environment required them to do. She argues that teachers involved in TELL need to adopt new roles as facilitators and co-learners rather then information presenters (p. 175). Stepp-Greany (2002) therefore proposes that professional development needs to include

> new pedagogical as well as technical and routine management skills. …instructors must learn to negotiate meaning with students in an unpredictable environment in which any question may be asked at any moment. [And] [t]hey must also learn to create opportunities for increased person-to-person interaction within a lab environment, and at the same time, manage these interactions and keep them task-focused (p. 175).

Other benefits reported in the studies include improved motivation, self-concept and mastery of basic skills, increased student centred learning and engagement in the learning process. Stepp-Greany (2002) reports in her study on student perceptions in a TELL environment of a beginning Spanish class that benefits for the students "include[d] increased motivation, improvement of self-concept and mastery of basic skills, more student-centred learning and engagement in the learning process, and more active processing, resulting in higher-order thinking skills and better recall" (p. 165). Ayres (2002) has also examined student attitudes towards the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). In his study, while students did not see CALL as a worthwhile replacement for classroom-based learning, they did see it as an important and extremely useful aspect of their studies. The use of CALL especially seemed to assist students in the areas of spelling, writing and grammar practice.

In line with the studies mentioned above and Chapelle's (2001) suggestion that one way of designing effective CALL activities is by evaluating the appropriateness of already existing CALL tasks, this study investigates learner perceptions of CALL and how computer activities can best be constructed to promote development of L2 ability.

The Study

The Purpose

The study attempts to gather some empirical data in order to find out how learners perceive the value of CALL activities supplementing their language courses at YADİM (School for Foreign Languages). The study did not attempt to empirically measure whether an improvement in language competency had resulted from using CALL. Rather, it gathered information about learners' attitudes towards the computers and the way in which they were used, and sought how learners saw the role of the instructors and whether the activities used in the lab were relevant to their use of English. While the data gathered was analysed statistically, the study also attempted to collect interview data which would assist YADİM administration in assessing the value of investing in high technology laboratories. It is also intended to gain useful insights as to future directions and methods for integrating CALL into existing programmes of language teaching.

The Setting

The School for Foreign Languages (YADİM) offers preparatory classes to both graduate and undergraduate students at different Faculties, Vocational schools and Institutes at Çukurova University. It provides students with a learning environment which ensures that they attain the level of proficiency in English necessary to follow their courses at their Schools or Faculties.

The CALL applications at YADIM are carried out at the computer labs housing 25 networked computers. The operating system is Windows XP. The software programs that are utilized are mainly for English language study. There is a range of software, from text-based grammar-practice programs to full multi-media (video/audio) based titles that enable learners to record their own voice and playback.

The activities carried out at the CALL lab included visiting web-sites to work with supplementary materials on the topics covered in the face-to-face teaching environment such as grammar points as well as reading, writing, and listening skills. CALL activities used at YADİM did not include using electronic chat rooms formally, but cross-cultural e-mail exchange is included after the students gain some competence in producing written work in English, which usually happens by the second term of the year. This aspect of the CALL lesson was not taken into consideration in the current study as this study was conducted as an evaluation of the first term.

The students at YADİM utilize the computer suites on a regular basis of one or two hours per week per class as a complementary to face to face teaching in traditional classrooms. These classes run for 18-week semesters and are full-time courses. The students also have a chance to use the computers at the Self-Access Centre for their free studies.

The Learners

Out of an enrolment of 285, the number of students who participated in the study was 188. Of these students, 146 of them were intermediate level whereas 33 were upper intermediate. Nine students did not mark their levels. The ages of the students differed from 17 to 34, the average age being 20,3. The number of male participants was 115 (61 %) while the number of female participants was 73 (38,8 %). The distribution of the participants to the Faculties and Institutes is given in Table 1 below:

The Instruments

In order to obtain data on student perceptions about the use of CALL as a complement to traditional classroom teaching, a questionnaire was administered to students at preparatory classes at YADİM, Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey. The

Table 1: *Distribution of the Participants to the Faculties and Institutes.*

Institution	*N*
Faculties	
Economics and administrative sciences	49
Engineering and architecture	73
Sciences and letters	12
Fine arts	4
Tourism and hotel management	4
Agriculture	17
Institutes	
Social sciences	6
Physical sciences	4
Medical sciences	1
Unknown	18

questionnaire was adapted from an instrument used at a study at Florida State University looking for student attitudes towards the use of technology (Stepp-Greany, 2002) in Spanish language teaching lessons. It contained 34 statements with which students were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, had no idea, disagreed or strongly disagreed. These statements aimed to elicit information about students' perceptions in five categories: (a) teachers' usefulness and facilitative behaviour in the CALL environment, (b) the usefulness and/or accessibility of the online resources or the lab environment itself, (c) the effect of CALL on learning subject matter and skills, (d) the effect of CALL on student interest and enjoyment of English or the relevance of the activities to their present or future study of English, (e) the effect of CALL on students' confidence as learners, technical skills, and performance on class assessments.

In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with 31 randomly selected students. During the interviews, ten questions which covered the points mentioned above were asked in order to get further data on student perceptions on the use of CALL applications in the learning environment (see Appendix I for interview questions).

Methodology

At the end of the fall semester of 2005, an adapted questionnaire (Stepp-Greany, 2002) was administered to students at preparatory classes at YADİM, Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey. The classroom tutors explained the purpose of the study to their classes and participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The students were instructed not

to complete any question that they did not fully understand, or asked to seek clarification from the tutor.

Apart from the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with 31 randomly selected students. Out of 31 students interviewed, 23 were intermediate and 8 were upper intermediate level. While 11 interviewees were female, 20 were male.

Results and Discussion

For the purposes of this article, data are reported in numbers and percentages of student responses for each statement, as shown in the Tables below.

Teacher Usefulness or Facilitation

More than 71 % of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor interacted with the students to facilitate difficulties with English in the activities. Students also agreed that the instructor provided other kinds of language assistance, with 63,6 % agreeing (20,3 % of the total respondents agreeing strongly) that the instructor provided vocabulary help. Over 67 % perceived that the instructor interacted with them to facilitate difficulties in the computer use. More than 67 % also agreed that having an instructor present during the lab increased learning potential in the class. For a remarkable number of students the guidance and facilitation of an instructor are still considered essential even after they learned how to do the activities. Over 40 % of the students disagreed with the statement, "Once I learned how to do the activities, the presence of the instructor was not necessary." An overwhelming majority (77,7 %) of the students perceived that their instructors facilitated instruction and that they were important to the CALL environment.

The interviews also reveal that students favour the existence of an instructor in the CALL environment. Out of 31, 25 students stated that they ask for help from the instructor in the CALL environment to overcome difficulties related to either computer use or English language use in the activities. They said

> *I often ask for help especially when there are unknown words or when I cannot decide which internet site is more helpful. She usually explains what to do before the session starts and we follow her directions.*

> *Someone should control what is happening at the lab. Otherwise, it is being used for other purposes like playing games.*

But not everybody agrees with the presence of the instructor as the following extract illustrates:

> *It is not very nice having an instructor directing us all the time which sites to enter. I would prefer to be free to choose the sites according to my own needs.*

Table 2: *Teacher Role and Facilitation*

Question	***Strongly disagree***		***Disagree***		***No response***		***Agree***		***Strongly agree***	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
20- The instructor interacted with me to facilitate difficulties in the use of the computer	12	6,5	32	17.3	16	8,6	85	45.9	40	21,6
21- The instructor interacted with me to facilitate difficulties with English in the activities	9	4,8	27	14,4	18	9,6	91	48,7	42	22,5
22- During the lab activities the instructor provided vocabulary help	2	1,1	7	3,7	28	15,0	31	16,6	81	43,3
24- Having an instructor present during the lab increased the learning potential in the class	10	5,3	21	11,2	30	16,0	95	50,8	31	16,6
25- Once I learned how to do activities the presence of the instructor was not necessary	17	9,0	59	31,4	26	13,8	58	30,9	28	14,9
32- Instructions for the Web activities were easy to understand	5	2,7	11	5,9	26	13,8	111	59,0	35	18,6

Access to Lab and Resources

Almost 47 % of the students believed that they did not have adequate access to the computer lab. Still it can be perceived that most of the students favour a lab environment, with over 78 % reporting that they liked the learning environment of a regularly scheduled lab. More than 74 % expressed a preference for having access to the lab at any time, without any scheduled lab period. Slightly less than half (46,8 %) expressed a desire to do all the activities at their own computer without any sessions in the lab.

The interview data also show us that students are not content with their access to the Computer lab because 27 interviewees out of 31 indicated that time allotted to activities in the lab should be increased. In addition, 26 students stated that they did not have adequate access to the lab. In fact, they said that

Table 3: *Access to Lab and Computers*

Question	Strongly disagree		Disagree		No response		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
23- Access to the lab or to computer was adequate	34	18,1	54	28,7	29	15,4	46	24,5	25	13,3
26- I liked the learning environment of having regular scheduled lab period	11	5,9	16	8,5	14	7,4	102	54,3	45	23,9
27- I would prefer the flexibility of not having a regular lab period, but of being able to go to lab at any time	4	2,2	26	14,1	18	9,7	60	32,4	77	41,6
28- I would prefer the flexibility of being able to do all activities at a computer outside the lab without any sessions at the lab	11	5,9	35	18,8	53	28,5	53	28,5	34	18,3

By the time we settle, log on and find the internet connection, almost half of the class time is gone. Just when you concentrate on what you are doing, the instructor says it is time to go.

I want the lab be open all days all hours just like self-access unit.

I have internet connection at home. So it is fine with me, I mean, having the useful addresses. I feel more relaxed at home because here it is a class atmosphere anyway.

Perceptions Concerning the Effect on Learning

Time invested

Almost 68 % of the students felt that they invested more time in a regular English class than they would have in a CALL class. This result might again have arisen from the limited time allotted to CALL applications compared to other courses in the students' schedule. Considering students spend one or two class hours per week at the computer lab, it is not surprising that they invest more time in their regular English classes.

Table 4: *Perceptions Concerning Effect on Learning*

Question	***Strongly disagree***		***Disagree***		***No response***		***Agree***		***Strongly agree***	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
4- I learned more English language skills than I would have learned in a regular course	26	14,1	56	29,7	36	19,5	60	32,4	8	4,3
5- The information from the lab activities contributed greatly to my knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary	10	5,3	36	19,1	47	25,0	74	39,4	21	11,2
6- I learned more about English culture in this class than I would have learned in a regular course	27	14,4	65	34,6	43	22,9	37	19,7	16	8,5
7- The information from the lab activities contributed greatly to my knowledge of English/American culture	24	12,8	70	37,2	44	23,4	39	20,7	11	5,9
8- I put more time in this class than I would have invested in a regular English class	40	21,7	86	46,7	20	10,9	25	13,6	13	7,1
15- My reading skills in English improved as a result of the lab activities	18	9,6	46	24,5	38	20,2	61	32,4	25	13,3
16- My writing skills in English improved as a result of the lab activities	27	14,4	62	33,0	33	17,6	53	28,2	13	6,9
17- My listening skills in English improved as a result of the lab activities	10	5,3	24	12,8	21	11,2	95	50,5	38	20,2
19- I learned a lot from the Internet activities	10	5,4	30	16,1	26	14,0	79	42,5	41	22,0
29- I returned to English related sites that I used or found on the Web to explore further on my own	8	4,3	28	15,0	28	15,0	92	49,2	31	16,6

Learning of culture

Almost 49 % of the students reported that they had learned more about English culture in a regular class than they would have learned in the CALL environment. Only the

28,2 % of the students believe that the CALL classes helped them learn more about English culture and only 26,6 % of the participants perceived that the information from the lab activities contributed greatly to their knowledge of English culture. Half of the students (50 %) disagreed with this statement. Similarly, in the interviews, only 7 students stated that they believed in the positive contribution of CALL activities to their knowledge of English culture. A possible reason for these results might be that students may find the time devoted to CALL sessions is not sufficient to appreciate the culture of the target language. Another might be that, as expressed by one of the interviewees, they might not be really aware of the relationship between the language and its culture. In the second extract, however, we see a different attitude.

> *Its contribution is very little because we are not dealing with their culture but with their language.*
>
> *We may not be aware of it but it certainly does contribute to our knowledge of English culture. ...The choice of words, idioms, where and how to use them etc.*

A pleasing result was that contrary to Stepp-Greany's (2002) findings, almost two-thirds (65,8 %) stated that they returned to English-related sites that they used or found on the Web to explore further on their own.

Communication skills

Students seemed to believe that the lab activities were beneficial to their listening skills. More than two-thirds (70,7 %) agreed that their listening skills had improved in English as a result of the lab activities. These perceptions corroborate the findings of improved listening skills reported by Stepp-Greany (2002) and Glisan *et al*. (1998). As for the reading skills, while almost half of the participants (45,7 %) perceived the contribution of the CALL activities, 34 % of the students did not believe in the effects of computer-mediated instructions on the improvement of their reading skills. These findings lend support to findings of improved reading skills reported by Beauvois (1994) and Lunde (1990).

The interview findings also reveal that a majority of students found the CALL lab activities, internet activities in particular, beneficial for the improvement of their listening skills. A majority of students (23 out of 31) stated that CALL lab sessions contributed greatly to their listening skills whereas only 9 found it beneficial for the improvement of their reading skills.

> *I do not have internet connection at home so I can find opportunities to improve my listening skills at the lab. Instructors are leading us how to best benefit from it.*
>
> *I am much better at listening and vocabulary. I find voiced dictionary very useful.*

When asked if they learned from the Internet activities, slightly more than 64 % of the students reported that they had learned a significant amount of information from those activities.

As for the writing skills, more than 35 % of the students believed that their writing skills had improved through experiencing CALL applications. This percentage is unexpectedly high considering the fact that writing activities are not included in the CALL lessons during the first term at which the questionnaire was administered. Therefore, it has been assumed that students would not have any chance to evaluate the direct effect of the course on their writing skills. One of the students clarified it in the following extract:

> *I feel my spelling in English is better now. When you misspell something, the computer warns you directly. I think it helps.*

While 36,8 % of the students felt that they had learned more English language skills than they would have learned in a regular English course, more than 43,8 % of the students stated that they disagree with this statement. When students were asked in the interviews to compare the CALL lab environment with their regular classes in terms of their effectiveness in student learning, the answers were again quite varied. Ten students stated that they found the CALL lab environment effective for their learning for a variety of reasons. Some students, for example, favoured the CALL environment as it provided room for individual work while some liked the opportunities it offers for listening or grammar practice. Others liked the CALL environment as the classroom management problems which would have occurred in a traditional classroom are naturally prevented since each individual concentrates on the computer in front of him/her. Those who favour traditional classrooms (N=7), on the other hand, proposed that traditional classes are more effective as they provide interaction with the teacher and classmates. One student said that he liked the opportunity of asking his teacher as many times as he liked when he did not understand any point covered in the class. Another one said that

> *I can progress at my own pace at the lab whereas in the classroom I need to wait for the others or they need to wait for me to finish the activity.*

The students further commented that although each learning environment has its advantages and disadvantages, they would like to see the two complementing each other. In fact, some proposed that 50 % of the instruction should be based on CALL activities and 50 % should be carried out in regular classes.

These results corroborate conclusions reached by other researchers (McGrath, 1998; Eggers, 1999; Bordonaro 2003). Eggers (1999) found out that students did not favour a course completely delivered online without having face-to-face interrogations. She concludes that her findings encourage educators to remember that there are still many things that can be done with paper, pencil, and chalkboards and the technology mediated course should be considered as only one piece in the big picture puzzle of learning language.

Table 5: *Interest and Relevance*

Question	Strongly disagree		Disagree		No response		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
1- The learning experiences in the lab made this a more interesting course	8	4,3	16	8,6	8	4,3	84	44,9	71	38,0
2- I would take another course in English that had a computer assisted component	6	3,2	16	8,6	12	6,4	74	39,6	79	42,2
3- If given a choice between a re-gular English class or a computer assisted English class, I would take a computer assisted class	16	8,5	42	22,3	25	13,3	52	27,7	53	28,2
18- I enjoyed the Internet activities	4	2,1	8	4,3	4	2,1	93	49,5	79	42,0
30- The tasks I performed on the Web were interesting	1	0,5	9	4,8	31	16,7	28	15,1	84	45,2
31- The tasks I performed on the Web were relevant to real-life need in the English language.	1	0,5	7	3,8	21	11,4	42	22,7	83	44,9
33- I enjoyed doing the computer based grammar tasks better than traditional grammar tasks	10	5,3	36	19,1	30	16,0	62	33,0	50	26,6

Employment and Interest

Although the perceptions on the instructional value of the CALL are divided, a high percentage of the participants (82,9 %) agreed that the computer lab made the course more interesting, and similarly a significant number of students (81,8 %) stated that they would take another CALL class in English. More than half of the respondents (55,9 %) said that if given a choice between a regular English class and a computer-assisted class, they would take the latter (% 30,9 of the participants disagreed with this statement). It is apparent that the majority of the students expressed a high interest level in the computer-assisted classes. Still, not all of them preferred computer mediated instruction to traditional face-to-face instruction. Yet the percentage (55,9 %) is a high one and shows the need to increase the hours and extend the content of computer mediated instruction at YADIM.

An overwhelming majority (91,5 %) of the students said that they enjoyed the internet activities. This response shows that much of the work in the CALL classes

stimulated student interest and enjoyment. The percentage of those who found the tasks performed on the web interesting is 62,9 %.

When we look at the interview results for more insights into this issue, we see that some students find CALL classes enjoyable while others seem to not be sure about it. The following extracts explain why:

> *I do not enjoy myself at all. When I face the computer, the programme, all those buttons distract my attention. I feel anxious what to do and where to click if something unexpected happens.*
>
> *If you are left alone with the computer and if you do not know much about it then it would not be enjoyable.*

Perceptions Concerning Effect on Learner Confidence, Technical Skills, and Class Assessments

Learner confidence and technical skills

More than half (56,8 %) of the students did not agree that they were initially frustrated by activities in the English language. Yet almost half of the students (49,5 %) agreed they had gained confidence in their ability to use technology successfully.

For a majority of students, CALL activities appeared to have had certain benefits. Approximately 60 % of students believed they had learned how to be resourceful in finding the meaning of difficult words or phrases on their own, and almost two-thirds (69,7 %) expressed a gain in confidence as independent learners. The interviews present us a more striking result over the same question. All of the students stated that CALL applications improved their skills to look for information on their own and to be more resourceful. The results might indicate the potential of CALL applications on increasing learner autonomy and creating more self-directed and self-controlled learners.

Class assessments

Slightly more than half of the students (51 %) stated that their general experiences in the computer lab helped them improve their scores. Indeed there was no direct link between CALL applications and general classroom assessments. Yet, the results regarding the contribution of CALL lessons to their tests might indicate that the students are aware that the involvement of technology in the learning environment might improve their overall learning and achievement in English.

Table 6: *Effect on Confidence as a Learner, Technical Skills, and Class Assessment*

Question	Strongly disagree		Disagree		No response		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
9- I gained technical skills on the computer as a result of this course	30	16,0	63	33,7	8	4,3	64	34,2	22	11,8
10- I gained confidence in my ability to use technology successfully	21	11,2	53	28,2	21	11,2	65	34,6	28	14,9
11- I was initially frustrated by the various activities at the lab	41	22,2	64	34,6	42	22,7	30	16,2	8	4,3
12- I gained confidence in my abilities to do English language activities	5	2,7	24	12,8	22	11,8	100	53,5	36	19,3
13- I gained confidence in my abilities as an independent learner	6	3,2	25	13,3	26	13,8	100	53,2	31	16,5
14- I learned how to be resourceful in finding the meanings of words or phrases that were difficult	7	3,7	29	15,4	41	21,8	85	45,2	26	13,8
34- The experiences in the lab helped me perform better on the regular quizzes or tests	19	10,1	33	17,6	40	21,3	62	33,0	34	18,1

Conclusion

The findings of this study imply that instructors' significant role persists when CALL applications are involved in the language learning environments. The results lend support to other reports (Glisan, *et al*., 1998; Stepp-Greany, 2002; Eggers, 1999; Kern, 1996; McGrath, 1998; Weiss, 1994) which also conclude that the role of a teacher as facilitator is important and demanded by students. The findings seem to indicate that students do not consider technological resources alone as tools leading to effective lessons. Students seem to favour the existence of a human touch in the learning environment integrated with other resources for their learning experiences.

The findings of the present study indicate that many students felt they did not have adequate access to a computer which probably resulted from the limited time allocated to CALL lab lessons. If we consider that more than half of the students prefer a computer assisted English class to a regular English class, we may conclude that

according to the students the time allotted to CALL lab lessons is not sufficient and should be increased.

High percentages of approval concerning the attractiveness of CALL applications in the language learning environment also lend support to the fact that students want to see CALL applications as a more intensive course. Many students pointed out that they would take another course in English that had a computer assisted component. Furthermore, a majority of students stated that they enjoyed the internet activities; the most highly endorsed item in the questionnaire. Thus, putting aside the instructional value of the use of technology we can conclude that technology serves as a great source to increase motivation for different learner types in the language learning environment. The findings show that the involvement of computers in the language learning environment is favoured by students. Most of the students did not believe that they learned more language skills than they have learned in a regular English course which may again be explained with the small amount of time allotted to CALL applications compared to the regular traditional teaching.

A surprising finding is the students' lack of endorsement to the contribution of CALL activities to their knowledge about English/American culture compared to regular traditional instruction. Generally, it is expected that the internet activities introduce students to plenty of authentic materials which lead to enhancing knowledge of the culture of the target language. Our findings do not support Stepp-Greany (2002) or Sanaoi and Lapkin's (1992) conclusions that technology enhances cultural awareness. However, it should be borne in mind that culture teaching is obviously not a single-faceted or an easy task for foreign language educators. As Cameron (1998) suggests, CALL and culture are inherently connected and it is impossible to separate cultural issues from devising a CALL program, for CALL is about language and language is a cultural issue par excellence. Therefore, the content of instruction and activity types carried out during the CALL sessions should focus on promoting an awareness of the relationship between the language and the culture of that society rather than a mere exposure to cultural input through information technology.

Regarding the language skills, CALL activities seem to have helped students mostly in improving their listening skills. This finding also lends support to the idea that the content of instruction and activity types carried out may be important factors affecting student perceptions. The content of the CALL lab lessons involved plenty of authentic listening activities available on the web. The apparently negative response on the contribution of CALL to the writing skills of the students may be explained with the lack of writing activities (i.e. cross-cultural exchange) within the CALL curriculum in the term that the study was conducted.

It is also worth considering the effects of the use of computers on improving the students' confidence in their abilities as independent learners. A majority of students state that they gained confidence in their technical and language skills as well as gaining confidence as independent learners. Also in the interviews, all of the

interviewees put forward that CALL applications improved their skills to look for information on their own and to be more resourceful. The finding supports the point that the involvement of technology in the learning environment increases autonomy of the learner, creating more self-directed and self-controlled learners.

Implications

The perceptions of students on the role and importance of the teacher in the learning environment are significant in indicating the need of the students for a teacher figure involved in the learning settings. The findings might be a soothing indication for those who fear technology to replace human existence in the language learning environment. The students support the presence of "the teacher" while using technology.

This might be a significant guide for teacher training. As the technology advances and goes into the learning environment with various new innovations, the need for staff trained on using and adapting technology in learning settings increases. In order to meet the demands of today's language teacher, trainers should consider providing special instruction for the language teachers helping integrate technology in their lessons.

The diversity of perceptions on the effectiveness of computer assisted and traditional instructions might be explained with difference in learning styles. It is clear that some students favour the CALL environment as it is attractive and provides equal conditions for different individuals. On the other hand, interaction with peers and the teacher in a traditional learning environment seem to be at first place for some others. This diversity might have resulted from the variety of the ways our brains function. This aspect of learning and its effects on the perceptions of students towards learning were not taken into consideration in this study. However, how learning styles might affect students' perceptions and learning in a CALL environment could be investigated in a further study.

The study has several other limitations. The factors which may have influenced student perceptions such as student abilities and students' technical knowledge in using computers were not taken into consideration. In addition, although the findings of the present study raise several important issues that need further exploration, the descriptive nature of these data prevent us from making any causal inferences. The data for this study was gathered using questionnaires and interviews. Thus, we need to be cautious in terms of the interpretation and generalisability of the results. It none-the-less yielded several important insights into the involvement of CALL in the language learning environment.

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Appendix:

Interview Questions

1- Do you get help from the instructor to facilitate difficulties either in English in the activities or in the use of computer during the CALL sessions?

2- Do you need the presence of the instructor once you learn how to do the activities?

3- Do you have adequate access to the computer lab?

4- Should time allotted to CALL be increased?

5- Is CALL more efficient than the traditional face-to face instruction?

6- Do you think this course contributed to your reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in English?

7- Do you think this course contributed to your knowledge of American / British culture?

8- Is working at the CALL lab more enjoyable than working in a traditional classroom?

9- Has CALL helped you to be a more resourceful learner and investigate on your own?

10- Has CALL helped you to gain technical skills on the computer?