ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL)
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Nowadays, computer is becoming one of the many media that is utilized to support human life. Utilization of computers penetrated almost all aspects of human life including education. Hartoyo (2008:13) stated that the utilization of computers in education is known as Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), Computer Based Instruction (CBI), or Computer Assisted Learning (CAL). Moreover, computer is also used to improve the effectiveness of language learning. In particular the use of computer in language learning becomes a method known as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

It is unknown exactly when the utilization of computers as a medium of language learning begin; however, Maddison (1983) in Hartoyo (2008:12) reveals that the educational technology and communication technology are like two sides of one coin which run concurrently.

CALL as a language learning method considered effective in improving the quality of language learning. For instance, research by Hartoyo (1998) proving that the use of CALL have a significant influence in enhancing students’ understanding of English grammar. Also, Sakai (2007:93) states that CALL can be used to increase students of L2 students to learn the language.

However, as a method, CALL certainly has its advantages and disadvantages. This article is aimed to review the advantages and disadvantages of the use of CALL as a method.
One obvious advantage is that CALL provides the non sequential reading habit. Because it is programmed electronically and designed effectively, “it allows users to make their own decisions to develop a selective and critical reading habit which enables them to scan a large amount of information of their interest” (Hartoyo, 2008: 27). In other words, the students should not get all the material available; they can go directly to the material required.

In addition, Ravichandran (2000) in Indrawati (2008) stressed, “classical language teaching in classroom can be monotonous, boring, and even frustrating, and students can loose interest and motivation in learning. CALL programmers can provide student ways to learn English through computer games, animated graphics, and problem-solving techniques which can make drills more interesting”. So that, by using CALL the process of teaching and learning can be more attractive.

Besides, CALL also lead the students to learn independently. Here, the students can learn the material without having to always be accompanied by the teacher. They can make the learning process any time, and they provide the opportunity to the teacher to be more concentrate on the learning process for other parts that can not be done by computer.

It also optimize the use of learning time. The time flexibility of using computer enables students to choose appropriate timing for learning. Students are given a chance to study and review the materials as many times they want without limited time. Moreover Hartoyo (2008:30) stated that the students who left the
teaching and learning process still have opportunity to learn the material as far as the material is available in CALL program.

Finally, the CALL program can be programmed to analyze the error that be made by the students. Ravichandran (2007) in Indrawati (2008) further, state that:

Computer database can be used by teacher to classify and differentiate the type of general error and error on account of the influence of the first language. A computer can analyze the specific mistakes that students made and can react in different way from the usual teacher, which make students able to make self-correction and understand the principle behind the correct solution.

Besides having many advantages as stated above, CALL also has many disadvantages.

First, we need more much money to get the computer as the media of CALL. It will complicate the poor students to join with the class process. Hartoyo (2008:32) assumed that a lot of fund have to be provided to purchase equipment, design, and maintenance. To support this idea, Lai (2006) said that:

When computers become a new basic requirement for student to purchase, low budget schools and low-income students usually cannot afford a computer. It will cause unfair educational conditions for those poor schools and students. On the other hand, expensive hardware and software also becomes the big obligations for schools and parents.

Second, it need the capability of operating the computer. Both teacher and students need to be able to operate the computer as the basic media of CALL. Unfortunately, as we know that there are still many teachers and students still lack of capabilities in operating computer. Therefore, as stated by Roblyer (2003) in Lai (2006), “the benefits of computer technology for those students who are not familiar with computer are inexistent”.
Third, the CALL programs still do not cover all aspects of language learning. For example, the programs that is designed for speaking skill are still limited in their functions (Lai, 2006). Warschauer (1996) in Lai (2006) pointed out,’a program should ideally be able to understand a user’s “spoken” input and evaluate it not just for correctness but also or “appropriateness”. It should be able to diagnose a student’s problems with pronunciation, syntax, or usage and then intelligently decide among a range of options’.

Fourth, when we utilize the computer as CALL, especially in reading, we will stay for long time in front of computer screen. Therefore, staring at a computer screen in a long time would interfere eye health.

It can be concluded that nowadays, the utilizing of CALL in teaching language is indispensable. Even though this method provide many advantages, we should know that actually this method also has limitations and disadvantages. Therefore, it is better for all the teachers to know these advantages and disadvantages before applying it in class in order to get the most effective teaching and learning process.

References:
