

In the Name of God



**Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University
Faculty of Humanities**

**The Investigation of Iranian EFL Learners' CALL
Attitude and Its Relationship with Learning Motivation and
Academic Self-Regulation**

By: Somayeh Foroozesh-nia

Supervisor: Dr. M. Meshkat

**A thesis submitted to the Graduate Studies Office in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language
(TEFL)**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the two greatest and dearest teachers from whom I've learned. To my precious father that I missed him a lot and every moment of my life is full of his kind memories; and to my beloved mother who is my all life and my heart beats only for her. Everything I am, I am because of them.

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Abstract

This study investigated the Iranian learners' attitudes towards computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and its relationship with motivation and academic self-regulation in learning English as a foreign language. Additionally, it explored the difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners' attitudes towards CALL. Two hundred and thirteen junior high-school students participated in this study and filled in CALL Attitudes, Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, and Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaires. The results of the data analysis revealed that Iranian EFL learners' CALL attitudes significantly and positively correlated with their motivation in learning English as a foreign language. It was also found that there was a significant and positive relationship between learners' CALL attitudes and their academic self-regulation. The findings also showed no significant difference between male and female students' CALL attitudes.

Key terms: CALL; CALL Attitude; Learning Self-Regulation; Learning Motivation;

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Abbreviations

A-CALL: Attitudes towards CALL

AMTB: Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

A-SRL: Academic Self-Regulated Learning

CAI: Computer Assisted Instruction

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

ICT: Information Communication Technology

IL: Information Literacy

L2: Second Language

PC: Personal Computer

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SRL: Self-Regulated Learning

TL: Target Language

TLC: Target Language Community

TRA: Theory of Reasoned Action

Chapter One

Introduction

1-1- Introduction

1-1-1-Computer Assisted language Learning (CALL)

The integration of computers into education has a relatively brief history. The earliest studies were attempts to establish programs that would provide the students with rapid feedback and thus made the students take an active role in the learning process, but because of the high costs of computers no prevalence could be obtained (Wilmore, 2001). Computer or technology in general, has an important position in our society, affecting our life more and more. The use of technology in teaching foreign language has dramatically been increasing over recent decades as the merits of technology in language learning and teaching are becoming more widely acknowledged worldwide.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) plays a greater role in education, and interactive CALL environment has a supplementary function alongside traditional teaching in classrooms that use chalk and board. CALL has been reported to have a positive effect on learners' performance and attitude (Smith, 2000; Bayrak & Bayram, 2010). Computer-mediated language learning helps students develop their both productive and receptive skills. Also, Warschauer (1997) believes that CALL helps learners use language in authentic situations.

1-1-2- Learners' Attitudes towards Technology and Motivation

Attitude has been defined as an acquired predilection to react positively or negatively to a situation, institution, particular object, or person (Yushau, 2006). Computer attitudes have been defined as an individual's general evaluation or feeling of approval or opposition towards

computer technologies and specific computer related activities (Smith, Caputi, & Rawstorne, 2000). Attitudes are an evaluative response to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent (Gardner, 1985). Attitudes have generally been divided into three components: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Liu, 2009). The affective component consists of a person's evaluation of, liking of, or emotional response to some object or person. The cognitive component has been conceptualized as a person's beliefs about, or factual knowledge of, the object or person. The behavioral component involves the person's overt behavior directed towards the object or person.

According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), motivation to learn a second language is grounded in positive attitudes towards the second language community and in a desire to communicate with valued members of that community and become similar to them.

Technology has a great role in improving individual's motivation in learning. Computers enhance motivation, engagement, and interest when students use multimedia programs and software designed to develop skills and knowledge. Using audio and video technologies brings content to life and stimulates learning (Reiner, Renner, & Shreiber, 2005). It has been commonly reported that motivation has a positive effect on students' performance in learning language skills. Related to this concept, Warschauer (1996) points out that CALL enhances students' motivation to learn language skills such as writing and improves communication and interaction.

1-1-3- Learner Autonomy

The concept of learner autonomy has been central to the Council of Europe's thinking about language teaching and learning since 1979, when Henri Holec wrote *Autonomy and foreign language learning* (Holec, 1981). Autonomy refers to the ability for self-determination or self-

control of actions (Wenden, 1997). Self Determination Theory postulates that autonomy support in social contexts contributes to intrinsic motivation for action (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). The concept of autonomy is explained by Littlewood (1996) as ability and willingness of learners to make choices independently. He goes on to elaborate by suggesting that ability depends on possessing both knowledge about the alternatives from which choice have to be made and necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Willingness depends on having both the motivation and confidence to take responsibility for the choices required.

1-1-4- Self-Regulation

Zimmerman (1989) defined self-regulation as the process by which learners set and maintain cognitions, affects, and behaviors in motion, which are thoroughly geared towards achieving their goals. Theories of self-regulated learning (SRL) (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989) consider cognition as well as motivational aspects of learning processes. In order to acquire competent self-regulatory strategies, Boekaerts (1996) explained that learners must first be skillful at forming a cognitive template of their learning goal and redefining it as needed. Next, they ought to be able to devise a flexible action plan delineating learning objectives and respective cognitive strategies they intend to use in various tasks. Finally, it is critical that learners monitor their behaviors, which might either facilitate or inhibit their goal achievement.

Corno and Mandinach (1983) viewed self-regulated learning as a deliberate planning and monitoring process and emphasized the importance of cognitive and meta-cognitive activities for self-regulated learning. Cognitive activities refer to rehearsal, elaboration, and organization (Hofer, Yu, & Printrich, 1998; Yang, 2000). According to Zimmerman (1999), meta-cognitive

activities are goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Goal setting refers to deciding on specific learning outcomes. A self-monitoring activity involves comparing goals and current accomplishments with the use of cognitive activities. Self-evaluation is a learners' judgment on their performance.

Self-regulation in the learning process implies cognizance upon the part of the learner to employ both cognitive and behavioral responses and strategies to monitor and guide one's own learning. The concept of self-regulation implies that learners can initiate processes to facilitate learning regardless of their perceived learning ability or environment, two learning characteristics once thought to be immutable forces (Zimmerman, 1990).

1-1-5- Self-regulation and Motivation

A meta-analysis of motivation studies has pointed to motivation as the key to success in learning a foreign or second language (Gardner, 1990; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Students' motivation depends on a variety of factors, among which one can refer to how they perceive their own achievement (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) explained that intrinsic motivation plays a mediational role in academic performance and that a strong correlation exists between students' intrinsic value and their cognitive strategies and self-regulation uses. In other words, students who were interested in learning the material for its own sake and thought it was meaningful and important (in addition to believing that they could succeed) ended up using various cognitive and self-regulating strategies, which had a positive influence on their academic performance.

With the increasing effect of technology on education, the research on this issue is growing as well. The effective role of computer in improving learning motivation has been demonstrated

in the literature and also it has been found that CALL can enhance learners' self-regulation in learning. The main purpose of the study, thus, is to investigate Iranian students' attitudes toward CALL and tries to find out possible relationships between students' CALL attitudes and their learning motivation and self-regulation

1-2- Statement of the Problem

As technology is playing rapidly and increasingly effective roles in the world; it influences education as well. Technology has heavily been integrated into education and curriculum in many developed countries for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers using computers in classrooms provide a more flexible teaching environment and present the material with a greater variety. Although the research on the effectiveness of CALL in the language domain had been undertaken in different settings (Warschauer & Healey, 1998), it is rather a new enterprise in Iran and some other developing countries.

Until quite recently, CALL was a topic of relevance mostly to those with a special interest in that area. Recently, though, computers have become so widespread in schools and homes and their use has expanded so dramatically that the majority of language teachers must now begin to think about the implications of using computers for language learning (Marzban, 2010). With the advent of technology and its integration with education in developing countries like Iran, schools have tried to be more equipped with computers than ever. Teachers and students are persuaded to use technology in teaching and learning. Administrators of education in different areas send various types of technological and educational software, audio or audio-visual CD-ROMs of different school subjects (e.g. mathematics, science, art, etc.) to teachers to use in teaching. As the author notes, teachers, at least in the studied area, do not apply these technological programs in their

teaching appropriately. Unfortunately, as it is seen at schools, principals and teachers do not have enough technology literacy in order to benefit from this new trend in education. Individual differences such as personal attitudes are a major factor to affect individual usage of information technology, and the understanding of users' (learners and/or teachers) attitudes facilitates the creation of appropriate CALL applications for teaching and learning (Vandewaeterea & Desmet, 2009; Liaw, Huang, & Chen, 2007). However, in this situation, where English language education in Iran is crucially important and facing an urgent need to reform (Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2010), considering the attitudes, motivation, and self-regulation of the learners is essential.

Moreover, as English is the international language and language of computers and internet as well, technology can play an important role in motivating users to learn English. Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011) explained that research on the relationship between computer and English has usually taken the direction of effect to be from computer use to success in English, suggesting a persuasive argument to support the fact that using technology and computer-mediated communication tools can impact second or foreign language learning. They concluded "knowledge of English can be a contributing factor to ease of technology use, perceived ease of use, positive attitudes, and even purchasing computers (PC ownership)" (Rahimi & Yadollahi, p. 19).

The theoretical framework for this study is based on three areas: theories of reasoned action (TRA), socio-psychology, and self-regulation. In what follows, variables and factors in each theory are discussed.

Attitudes are cognitive behavioral patterns in response to aspects that are faced in learning. Krech and Crutchfield (1948) stated, "an attitude can be defined as an enduring organization of

motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspects of the individual's world" (p.152). Attitudes can impact individuals' behavior directly or indirectly (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980: as cited in Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2011). Fishbein and Ajzen's (1980) theory of reasoned action (TRA) explains clearly the attitude-behavior relationship. According to this theory, a behavior or an action is influenced by a person's attitude while attitude is defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (p. 6). In line with this, it was found that, as individuals' attitudes on e-learning and computer-based learning become more positive, they will have greater behavioral intention to use it (Liaw et al., 2007). Hence, a learned predisposition naming attitude with three components: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Zimbardo, 1969), is a crucial factor in emerging behavior of implementation of the technology.

String of research demonstrated that technology can affect students' learning and motivation. Motivation is one of the main factors which affects success of the language learner. Gardner's motivation theory has four areas: *integrative motivation*, *socio-educational model*, *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)*, and *recent extended L2 motivation construct*. Motivation in learning English can be explained with the help of Gardner's Socio-psychological Model of Second Language Acquisition. Gardner and Lambert (1972) define *motivation* as the second language learner's overall goal and orientation and *attitude* as the learner's persistence in striving to attain the goal. However, *motivation* and *attitude* are not clearly delineated from one another in that the learners' motivation for language study would be determined by their attitudes and readiness to identify and by their orientation to the whole process of learning a foreign language. Gardner and Lambert identify two types of motivation: *instrumental motivation*, or "a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign

language”, and *integrative motivation*, or “a desire to be a representative member of the other language community” (1972, p. 14). They found that learners with integrative motivation were more successful in learning a second/foreign language than those with instrumental motivation. According to Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model, motivation is an internal attribute of the individual that can be influenced by external forces. Most studies of the model have focused on integrative motivation as its central feature and key individual difference variable (Gardner, 1996; Gardner & Masgoret, 2003). Similarly, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed a model along with Gardner’s theory for motivation in educational psychology and distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In their Self-Determination Theory, *intrinsic motivation* comes from within the individual and is related to the individual’s identity and sense of well-being. *Extrinsic motivation* comes from outside the individual. Students are extrinsically motivated when learning is done for the sake of rewards (such as grades or praise) that are not inherently associated with the learning itself, that is, when learning or performing well becomes necessary to earning those rewards. Technology-based education often requires students to take on greater responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, intrinsic motivation is crucial for the completion of CALL courses. This study is designed to find out whether motivation and desire to learn a language has relationship with learners’ attitudes towards CALL.

On the other hand, with the advent of the new Information and Communication Technology (ICT), computer programs have become more complex and it can be argued that the high degree of complexity at least requires and possibly affords a higher degree of self-regulation. Variety of studies support that technology provides opportunities for effective learning and teaching and can affect students’ learning and motivation and can also increase learners’ self-regulation and autonomy (Mahdizadeh, Biemans, & Mulder, 2008; Claudia, Steil, & Todesco, 2004;