Investigating the Need for Computer Assisted Cooperative Learning to Improve Reading Skills Among Yemeni University EFL Students: A Needs Analysis Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this needs analysis article was to investigate the students’ needs for computer assisted cooperative learning (CACL) in studying reading skills. The needs analysis depends on present situation analysis (PSA). The result of the analysis showed that both professors and students use the internet for reading outside the university. Moreover, both professors and students showed that the students need CALL, cooperative learning in studying reading skills. There is a need, therefore, for implementing computer assisted cooperative learning in teaching reading comprehension skills because this is a new method for Yemeni students and it might help them to improve their reading skills as reading has not been improved among Yemeni university EFL students in the last two decades. More importantly, although Yemeni students have not experienced e-learning before, they are willing to accept CACL as a new teaching method.

KEYWORDS
CALL, Computer Assisted Cooperative Learning, Cooperative Learning, Needs Analysis, Reading Skills, Yemeni University EFL Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Computers have become a part and parcel of our life and have influenced almost every dimension including education and especially the field of language teaching and learning. The use of computers in the field of language teaching and learning is growing fast since it started to spread in the 1970s (Yang, 2010). The aspects of this technology have influenced not only the developed countries but also the developing countries like Yemen although it is not officially used inside the universities, but as a personal effort (Al-kadi, 2013). Besides, Mokhtari (2013) state that the number of the learners

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who use Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is increasing and researchers and teachers are devoting their efforts to integrate technology to teaching.

Moreover, there are many teaching methods that have been developed to maximize the benefit for EFL learners like Cooperative Learning (CL). Cooperative learning has proved to be an effective method in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) since it makes the process of teaching student-centred (Meng, 2010a; Gupta & Ahuja, 2014). Learners become involved in the learning activities when cooperative learning strategies are used during teaching which gives the students a chance to participate inside the classroom and become active participants (McCafferty, Jacobs & Iddings, 2004). This method is effective to improve students’ reading comprehension skills (Al-Munawwarah, 2013).

There are studies that link CALL and CL under Computer Assisted Cooperative Learning (CACL); however, such studies are scarce. The studies which investigated teaching through CACL proved that it is an effective method (Ahangari & Sioofy, 2013; AbuSeileek, 2012).

Reading in Yemen has not improved in the last two decades (Azman, Bahooth & Ismail, 2013). This problem might be mainly attributed to the traditional teaching methods in Yemeni universities which keeps the student passive during the classes (Bose, 2002; Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Yassin & Razak, 2017; Yassin & Razak, 2018). This shows that there is a need to introduce new or innovative methods like CACL to Yemeni university EFL students in order to help them improve their reading skills. Perhaps shifting the focus to a student-centered approach might be the solution here.

The focus on reading skills is to assist the students in order to read the materials provided by the professors. Also, reading is important for studying other subjects as it is the main skill for the students at the university (Safdarian, Ghyasi & Farsani, 2014; Modirkhamene & Gowrki, 2011). More importantly, instructors in Yemen concentrate mainly on speaking, listening and writing skills and do not pay enough attention to reading (Al-Shawesh & Hussin, 2015).

English language needs analysis is used to determine the students’ needs in order to design a course and develop the materials, and to implement specific techniques in the process of teaching (West, 1994; Brown, 1995). Such studies are almost absent among Yemeni university EFL students although the previous studies showed that reading has not improved among Yemeni students (Azman et al., 2013; Al-Shawesh & Hussin, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the need to use CACL to improve reading skills among Yemeni university EFL students. This will be the first step to implement CACL.

More importantly, introducing any innovation to students especially with using technology might create resistance from the students (Mncube, Dube & Ngulube, 2017). Accordingly, needs analysis studies are important to test the students’ weakness using Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and their expected needs to improve reading skills using Target Situation Analysis (TSA). This will marginalize the resistance to e-learning if the students show that they need to study reading skills using CALL.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The main objective of the study is to investigate the needs of the students for Computer Assisted Cooperative Learning from the perspective of students and teachers. The study investigates to what extent is there a need for Computer Assisted Cooperative Learning to teach reading skill to Yemeni university EFL students.

3. COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Scholars have given different definitions for cooperative learning. Olsen and Kagan (1992) viewed cooperative learning as social exchange of information among the students making every student responsible for his learning and the other students’ learning. Moreover, cooperative learning is considered a task activity among students with heterogeneous levels (Vermette, 1998; Johnson & Johnson 2002). One of the principles of cooperative learning is positive independence which makes
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