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Teachers’ support in using computers for developing students’ listening and speaking skills in pre-sessional English courses

Bin Zou*

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Many computer-assisted language learning (CALL) studies have found that teacher direction can help learners develop language skills at their own pace on computers. However, many teachers still do not know how to provide support for students to use computers to reinforce the development of their language skills. Hence, more examples of CALL activities need to be offered to language teachers to help them use the computer in various teaching contexts. This article explores how teachers provide support to help students use CALL programs efficiently to improve their listening and speaking skills when learning English in pre-sessional courses in the higher education context. This discussion examines the perspective of both teachers and students through questionnaires, interviews and observations in the computer labs of two universities in the UK. The findings suggest several potential ways that teacher assistance may help students use computers more effectively for their language practice.

Keywords: CALL; teachers’ support; listening and speaking

Introduction

The teacher’s role in language teaching not only includes offering learners linguistic knowledge but also organizing learning activities to help students develop their communicative skills, and motivating and encouraging them to engage in these activities (Tudor, 1993; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). By providing support, teachers can affect students’ motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). Wright (1987, p. 62) agrees that teachers need to “set up dialogues in which learners reorganize their states of knowledge”, when “learners already know a great deal and have the ability to refashion that knowledge”. This suggests ways in which teachers create these tasks to motivate students in their language learning. The teacher’s role also includes giving feedback on the students’ work because the teachers’ evaluation and comments help to enhance efficient language learning (Sugita, 2006). Voller (1997) describes the teacher’s role as helping learners plan and conduct their individual language learning, assisting them in evaluating themselves, and guiding them towards attaining the necessary skills and knowledge. These perspectives highlight the important role of teachers in the language learning process.

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In the computer-assisted language learning (CALL) field, researchers have suggested that computer-assisted learning can be influenced by teacher instruction (Little, 2002; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010), and that learning by this method still depends on teacher support, including explanation, evaluation and feedback. Without teacher and peer feedback, the potential benefits of using this technology may not be realized (Chapelle, 2003; Zou, 2007). Teachers need to set up activities and provide support to students when they work on computers for language learning (Paulsen, 2001).

CALL teacher support involves selecting appropriate CALL programs as well as designing and setting up suitable activities that employ CALL tasks in ways that give further benefit to the learners (Chapelle, 2001, 2003). Furthermore, Chapelle (2001) suggests that a principal concern for the teacher will be in the choice of software, which requires careful planning of how to integrate the use of CALL into lessons. Actually, one of the evaluations of using CALL programs is to see if the teacher offers tasks to students to help their learning activities. Similarly, according to Egbert (2005), when software or online materials are used in the language class, teachers should offer extra tasks to make the content accessible to the students to improve their language learning. Such teacher support reinforces classroom computer-based learning (Bax, 2003; Chambers & Bax, 2006), so teachers should provide pedagogical design in CALL environments (Chen & Cheng, 2008).

In terms of using computers for listening and speaking practice, studies have confirmed that computers are effective for developing L2 listening and speaking skills (Butler-Pascoe & Wiburg, 2003; Hegelheimer & Tower, 2004; O’Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007; Slater & Varney-Burch, 2001; Sun, 2009; Winke, Gass, & Sydorenko, 2010). However, many of these studies have discussed students’ independent computer learning without giving much consideration to the teachers’ role (Hegelheimer & Tower, 2004; Sun, 2009; Sun, Chang, & Yang, 2011; Winke, Gass, & Sydorenko, 2010). Although many studies may have provided suggestions on various support methods teachers can use (e.g. Miceli, Murray, & Kennedy, 2010; Wang, Chen, & Levy, 2010; Yang, 2011), they have not covered all types of language teaching contexts. As Egbert (2005, p. 4) remarks: “CALL research currently does not address ... differences in context well”. Consequently, many language teachers still do not exactly know what they should design and how to organize CALL tasks to help learners develop their language skills (Zou, 2011), for example, in a university pre-sessional language course context. The issue of teacher support for CALL study needs more evidence and examples for various teaching contexts if such support is to benefit language teachers and help them efficiently integrate computers into their teaching, specifically in pre-sessional English courses in the higher education context. This is also supported by Huh and Hu’s (2005) assertion that future CALL research needs to concentrate on various contexts and provide more examples and descriptions to benefit learners in these contexts. More importantly, many previous CALL studies have found students’ motivation and necessity of teacher support for vocabulary and grammar learning (e.g. Barr, 2008; Powell, 1998; Schulz, 2001), but may have not focused much on motivational factors from teacher feedback and direction in listening and speaking practice. For example, although Barr (2008) discovered that students enjoyed language practice on the computer and the teacher’s role is essential to support students’ CALL work, his study was only based on grammar teaching and learning and did not mention the development of listening and speaking skills. Despite the fact that some CALL studies might cover listening and speaking practice, but did not give details of types of teacher support (e.g. Stepp-Greany, 2002).
Hence, the author is particularly interested in exploring examples of support in such courses in university language centers in the UK. Although these language centers have provided CALL programs for international students to develop their language skills, there seems to be a lack of research in offering tutors examples of types of teacher support for using CALL programs in their courses in these contexts. Therefore, the current research was conducted in pre-sessional English courses at two UK university language centers. The aim of this study was to investigate in what ways teachers provide support and pedagogical design when using CALL programs to develop learners’ listening and speaking skills in pre-sessional language courses and to further develop the ways (e.g. examples of design of activities) of the well-established principle of CALL research in adding teacher support in CALL contexts. The following research questions guided the current study:

1. In what ways do students interact with the teacher when they work on computer-based tasks to practice their listening and speaking skills in pre-sessional English courses?
2. How does the teacher direct students in using computer programs to develop listening and speaking skills during these sessions?

Methodology

The two UK university language centers provide computer programs including software and online programs for students to practice listening and speaking skills with during their English as a second language (ESL) pre-sessional courses. In addition to regular classroom lessons for listening and speaking, teachers in the two language centers bring students to computer rooms to use CALL programs for language instruction. From Table 1 below, it can be seen that University A Language Center provides EASE: Listening to Lectures, EASE: Seminar Skills 1: Presentations, SKY: Pronunciation and online sources in Transferable Academic Skills Kit (TASK) series which focuses on the development of academic skills for students to practice their listening and speaking skills in and out of class. Teachers and students at University B Language Center use eLanguages, EASE: Listening to Lectures, Streaming Speech and SKY for listening and speaking in and after class.

These CALL programs provide students with extra opportunities and tasks to practice their language skills. These programs also offer authentic lectures,
presentations and seminars with video recordings on a variety of subjects. Students can watch these videos, complete CALL tasks and become familiar with academic environments to develop their understanding of these academic contents to cope with their academic study in the future. These authentic materials are not obtained in normal ESL classes given by language teachers. Therefore, the two language centers encourage tutors and students to use these CALL programs in and after class.

The pre-sessional English courses are provided by UK universities to help international students develop academic English and study skills at undergraduate to postgraduate level in order to help them cope with their academic study in the future. Those students whose IELTS (International English Language Testing System) scores range from 5.0 to 6.0 need to take the pre-sessional courses from 4 to 12 weeks between June and September to improve their English as well as academic study skills and obtain the IELTS scores of 6.5 or 7.0 required for registration at the two universities. After they have received the required scores in IELTS Test or in-house test, they will then be allowed to commence either undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in UK universities. They will not be authorized to enter the universities for their academic study if they do not achieve the required scores. At the time of this research, the two universities had enrolled approximately 200 international students in the pre-sessional English courses, which were taught by over 20 teachers. The students in both language centers similarly ranged from 20–28 years old and came from countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Italy, Cyprus, Germany, and Greece. Courses and contents in the pre-sessional courses covering academic and general English skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking are similar in the two universities.

Data collection consisted of questionnaires, interviews and observations. The questionnaire aimed to investigate students' experience, perceptions and opinions of teachers' support during their use of CALL technology. Tutors distributed the questionnaires to all the students in the two language centers, of which 121 were returned with data. Most of the questions were structured and were provided within related topics. Various response formats were provided, from two to five categories for the questions. Multiple answer formats were produced from two to five categories and students could select from given choices. The questionnaire data were analyzed using the statistical analysis computer package SPSS, with tables generated to show the percentage of responses for each question, using descriptive techniques to describe the percentages illustrated in the tables. A coding system was used to categorize answers according to question type; for instance, “Strongly agree” was coded “1”, “Agree” was coded “2”, etc.

Interviews were used as a second research tool because an interview was likely to provide more in-depth insights than questionnaires alone. The main aims of the interviews were to explore what sorts of help teachers offer to students when doing CALL speaking and listening tasks, and the attitudes of the teachers and students towards such support. In order to obtain in-depth replies, open-ended questions for semi-structured interviews were adopted in the current study. Most of the questions were followed by several sub-questions to invite interviewees to provide more details. Questions included why and how teachers provided support during the use of CALL programs to develop listening and speaking skills; what types of support the teachers provided and what were participants’ perceptions of teachers’ support to students work on CALL tasks. Questions for interviews were the same and spread across both universities.
Fifteen teachers who had used computers for listening and speaking practice in the pre-sessional courses in the two centers accepted invitations for voluntary individual interviews with the help of two coordinators of the language centers. They used similar CALL programs in the computer labs to develop students’ listening and speaking skills. Twenty-one students who were willing to be interviewed were randomly selected from various classes with the help of teachers in the two centers. These 21 student interviewees were from various classes and countries, and thus were a fair representation of the student body in the two centers. Finally, 36 participants were involved in interviews in this study. The 30- to 60-minute interviews took place during class breaks, in the teacher’s office and student flats, and were recorded with permission.

A third research method used in this study was observation of the actual proceedings in the computer rooms, paying particular attention to teacher support. After obtaining tutor consent, four lessons were observed and recorded with a digital audio-recorder and field notes. The author focused on how teachers interacted with students during their computer work and on the types of activities and worksheets teachers used to help the students complete their computer-based tasks. In addition, it was noted what students were asked to do in order to complete their tasks, and whether students worked individually or in pairs or groups for assigned collaborative tasks.

The questionnaire, interview and observation data were synthesized and then analyzed. The relevant information from the three types of data was identified and put into categories for the analysis. For this analysis, teachers and students were assigned codes (T1, T2, etc. for teachers; S1, S2, etc. for students); the data were then compared and analyzed for both supporting and contradictory relationships in regard to the research questions, and a holistic synthesis was obtained. For instance, when analyzing interview data concerning teacher and student comments on certain computer tasks, the author triangulated those findings with the related observation and questionnaire data. When student interviewees said they enjoyed completing particular computer-based tasks prepared by teachers, for example, the author examined the corresponding questionnaire responses to determine whether this was true for other students as well. Additionally, the observation of student concentration on such tasks was also considered. This combination of three research techniques and the triangulation of their results increases the validity and reliability of the study, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000). Finally, the results of teachers’ support were similar in the two centers, therefore, the analysis of results in the two institutions was incorporated together.

**Findings**

The findings in this study show that teachers offered support in a variety of ways during the pre-sessional CALL lessons. This support can be grouped into two categories: student–teacher interaction (e.g. asking and answering questions) and teacher’s direction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening (%)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking (%)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N = 121$; Missing: 3% for listening; 4% for speaking.
Student–teacher interaction

As shown in the questionnaire data in Table 2, 59% of students questioned said they often received feedback from their teachers for computer listening tasks, with 69% for speaking tasks. About one-third of students reported receiving at least some listening feedback; one-fifth reported the same for speaking and only 7% reported not receiving any feedback. So generally speaking, the results suggest that the majority of teachers often gave feedback to students working on computer-based tasks. Furthermore, as can be seen in the questionnaire data (Table 3), more than 60% of the students reported valuing feedback from teachers in class for both listening and speaking tasks. These findings indicate that though students could receive feedback from CALL programs, they also obtained teacher feedback. Students perceived preference for teacher feedback. One possible reason for this could be that the teacher can provide more details of feedback for students’ work on the CALL programs than that the computer does, and therefore, students still like to receive teacher feedback. The interview data below give an explanation of teacher feedback.

The interviews supported results in the questionnaire above and explored details of how teachers provided feedback. Students reported that they asked their teachers questions and received answers and feedback from them while working on the CALL tasks. Despite the fact that the computer program also gave feedback, many students reported that they still asked their teachers questions whenever they had problems related to either linguistic or technical issues, for example, the language materials, the meaning of words and sentences in CALL tasks, and procedures of CALL tasks.

All student interviewees welcomed teacher support for both linguistic and non-linguistic questions and explained reasons for it. For example, student 5 (S5) commented that the feedback from the teacher was better than from the computer, because when he had a question about pronunciation or about the meaning of a task or how to complete it, the computer was unable to answer. The teacher, however, answered his questions and encouraged him to practice more on the computer. For these reasons, he appreciated his teacher’s feedback, answers and advice. S8 addressed this point: “I think feedback from teachers is the best. If they look at the result from the computer and give me the feedback by talking, I can get more descriptive information”. This means that S8 considered that the teacher’s feedback added to her comprehension. These students’ comments indicate that they valued their teachers’ feedback during the CALL programs because it helped them correct their mistakes and improved their understanding of the language and the tasks, although they could receive mechanical feedback from the computer.

Table 3. How do you prefer to obtain feedback on computer-based tasks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the computer</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the tutor</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From your partner</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *N* = 121.
These results show that teachers answered questions and offered help when students wanted. The reason for students’ preference for teacher feedback could be that teachers’ answers and feedback developed the students’ comprehension on language materials and helped them complete CALL tasks, which kept students working on computers in an effective way and motivated them to work on CALL tasks consistently.

Not only did the students ask questions, during CALL lessons, the teachers also asked the students questions to check their understanding of the programs or the procedure of the tasks on computers. Student respondents gave some examples of this interaction. For instance, S4 reported that the teacher had given them a worksheet for a pronunciation and word-stress lesson in SKY, a program for pronunciation practice. After the students listened to words on computers, they were asked to write task answers, using the phonetic alphabet, on the worksheet. Then the teacher gave them feedback by checking answers and giving explanations. Students commented that they liked completing exercises which teachers prepared for them. This could be explained by the fact that the task worksheet and feedback from the teacher helped students check their understanding of their pronunciation tasks in SKY. In particular, when students made mistakes on CALL tasks, the computer could not give an explanation, but the teacher could explain to them. Teacher feedback further developed their comprehension and therefore, students liked the extra tasks given by the teacher. This suggests that students were motivated in working on this task, a finding which supports Dörnyei (2001) who suggests that when students like an activity in their learning process, they may be motivated.

Teachers explained that their reason for questioning students is to reinforce their understanding of the computer work. For instance, teacher 2 (T2) said she asked questions on worksheets to see what students had gained from the computer task, what areas they found difficult, and what problems they encountered. She said she questioned students to “see what things they are getting right, what they are getting wrong, and to make notes on things being poor”. She felt that this help enhanced her students’ CALL language learning.

Providing comprehension questions for students to complete after their computer listening practice is another way that some tutors provided assistance. T9 said, for example, after the students finished listening to news, lectures, presentations or conversations, she asked them to summarize what they had listened to, which she feels is an important skill, and to answer questions such as: “What did you find interesting?”, “What were you surprised by?”, and “What were you shocked by?” T12 supported this assistance and suggested that teachers needed to be “a little bit creative” if they wished to make the CALL materials more useful for language learning purposes, such as offering comprehension questions. This suggests that these teachers may not think that the CALL programs can offer sufficient instruction and feedback to their students, and therefore they liked to provide extra support and interact with students frequently to enhance students’ work on the CALL programs.

Classroom observations provided similar data, such as observations of teachers asking their students questions to check their understanding. For example, in a class that was using Streaming Speech, a program for developing listening and speaking skills, the teacher asked the students such questions as, “Is it hard?” “Are you all right?” These questions gave students opportunities to ask for assistance from the teacher to complete their CALL tasks. The teacher also helped them to repeat words correctly. Similarly, at the end of a class session using EASE: Seminar Skills 1:
Presentations, a program for developing presentations skills, the teacher provided a worksheet of questions for students to think about after class, such as “What should you prepare for the seminar?” and “Can you give examples of good or bad practice at the seminar?” The intention was that the students would answer these questions in the next lesson. These questions helped students to think about the seminars and the strategies needed for preparing seminar presentations. This indicates that the questions prepared by the teacher could develop their thinking skills and then improve their presentation skills. The data from the observations provided genuine evidence of the interaction between teachers and students to support participants’ perspectives in the interviews.

Teacher’s direction
During the interviews, students reported that teachers provided activities to direct them in completing CALL tasks in class, both for those working individually and with peers. The majority of student interviewees valued teacher’s direction. For example, two students noted that it was very useful for them when teachers directed them in the completion of various listening and speaking tasks. They said that they appreciated and were motivated by this structure, and that they learned more this way than they did in less structured situations. This suggests that the students felt that teacher direction resulted in their deriving more profit from their computer tasks.

In the interviews, many teachers provided examples of how they directed students to work on CALL tasks. For instance, T6 said that she organized discussions or presentations using online resources so that students were able to present their findings to practice their speaking skills. T2 also remarked that he guided his students into peer discussions to practice speaking skills learned by computer. He said that he gave feedback for the computer-based tasks the students completed, and initiated the discussions to practice the new skills learned from the CALL lessons because he felt that without such support there was a danger that the students would not understand the key learning points of the lessons.

Observation data showed real examples of activities that teachers set up when students used CALL programs. To help give students direction for specific online materials to use in peer discussions, teachers used the TASK package; this package also develops students’ study skills, including thinking and speaking in an academic environment. During an observation of TASK use at one university, a teacher asked her students to search for information individually on web sites provided at the end of the unit in TASK and then answer questions using a worksheet on-screen that she had prepared, after which they discussed their answers with their peers. The information obtained from their individual work helped their later peer discussions. Students were observed discussing their findings with peers enthusiastically and enjoying their discussions. This indicates that the tasks assigned by the teacher enhanced students’ individual and collaborative work and motivated students to work on CALL tasks. This finding reinforced participants’ insights in the interviews.

In a post-observation interview, the same teacher said that she believed that the way she directed was very useful for students, because, although the computer programs were integrated with automatic and individual learning, many students still felt frustrated when they had to work on computers on their own; they preferred that the sessions be directed by a teacher. They wished to receive more feedback from
teachers to enhance their computer learning. She found that students needed this direction and feedback even for their self-study on CALL programs.

The questionnaire data corresponds with these observations and interviews. In Table 4, for example, 71% of the students reported that the direction provided by their teachers helped them improve their listening skills more than when studying alone, and 84% of the students reported the same for speaking skills. In contrast, only about a quarter of the students reported that doing computer work without teacher assistance improved listening skills more, and only a small minority (11%) thought that doing it alone improved speaking skills more. The results of this study, therefore, show that the majority of students from the sample felt that teacher direction helped them further improve their listening and speaking skills when studying on computers than when working independently.

In addition, the results in Table 5 show a relationship between teachers’ directions and students’ improvement. The Chi-Square $p = 0.000 < 0.01$, which means that the relationship between the frequency of teacher feedback and the extent of student improvements during computer language-learning sessions is significant. This means that students perceived that teachers’ support could help them make more improvement in their listening and speaking skills than individual study on CALL tasks. This finding supports the results in Table 4. Therefore, the questionnaire data results indicate that, according to participants’ perceptions,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's directions</td>
<td>86 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-study</td>
<td>29 24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N = 121$; Missing: 5%.

Table 5. The relationship between teacher feedback and student improvement during computer-based language study (Chi-Square tests).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
<th>Student improvement</th>
<th>$N$ of valid cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frequency of teacher feedback</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. The relationship between teacher feedback for students’ listening and speaking tasks on computers and student improvements (Chi-Square tests).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
<th>Student improvements in speaking skills</th>
<th>Student improvements in listening skills</th>
<th>$N$ of valid cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher feedback for students’ listening tasks</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher feedback for students’ speaking tasks</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students studying computer language programs make more improvement when they receive teacher support frequently.

Interestingly, the questionnaire data as shown in Table 6 demonstrate that there is also a significant correlation (Chi-Square $p = 0.000 < 0.01$) between the frequency of teacher feedback for listening tasks and increased improvement in speaking skills. This could mean that teacher feedback for students’ listening tasks on computers may also benefit students’ speaking skills, based on students’ perspectives in the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the Table 6 data show a positive correlation between the frequency of teacher feedback for students’ computer-based speaking tasks and student improvement in listening skills (Chi-Square $p = 0.000 < 0.01$). This indicates that when teachers gave feedback to students’ speaking activities on computers, as students said, it also helped them improve their listening skills. These findings support Sugita’s (2006) claim that teacher feedback helps enhance students’ efficiency in language learning.

The reason for these findings above could be that the teacher guided students to work on CALL tasks either individually or with peers in order to achieve the effective use of the CALL programs. Without teachers’ direction, the learning efficiency in using CALL programs could be impaired.

Discussions and conclusion

This article presents the use of CALL programs in pre-sessional courses at two university language centers in the UK. The CALL programs offer opportunities to the students to take extra practice for their language learning and academic study. The findings show that teachers provided various means of support to help students work with the CALL programs to develop listening and speaking skills. Participants were positive about these types of support, which help and motivate students to work on CALL tasks effectively. Firstly, the combined results from the three data-collection methods indicate that both teachers and students valued student–teacher interaction. The teacher support was motivational and provided students with opportunities to solve problems arising from their work with CALL tasks. Even though the listening and speaking computer programs provided feedback, students still liked receiving teacher feedback because teachers were better able to point out their problems and mistakes, analyze the reasons for their problems, and give advice. This is in contrast to the CALL programs, which can only provide correct answers or give limited explanation, which students may not comprehend well. This suggests that teacher feedback has turned into an advanced level of explanation and support in the CALL environment, which students cannot obtain from the computer. With this type of interaction, students’ language learning may be better than when working individually because teachers’ support is likely to have enhanced students’ comprehension and have reinforced their language learning on computers. The above results answered the first research question and showed various ways of student–teacher interaction during CALL tasks as well as positive perspectives of this interaction from participants. The findings can remind teachers that they need to interact with students when they use any computer or online programs for any level of language learners and should not leave students alone on computers.

Secondly, the results indicate that both teachers and students recognized that teachers’ direction was of value to the students and was able to keep them on task. More importantly, participants believed that teacher input during computer work
helps students develop listening and speaking skills more effectively than when just working alone. This is because teacher’s direction and extra activities guide students to work on CALL programs in the correct way and can motivate students to work on CALL programs. The extra activities prepared by the teacher can include worksheets (e.g. MCQs or comprehension questions) for students to complete. Teachers should then offer feedback on the worksheets. Worksheets provide helpful levels of structure in two ways: by offering comprehension questions for students to develop their understanding of the material on computers and directing students to the topic they should search for, what tasks they should be doing and how they should do them. This finding is reflected by Egbert’s (2005) suggestion that when software or online materials are used in the language class, teachers should offer extra tasks to make the content accessible to the students to improve their language learning. This suggests that in order to facilitate more efficient use of CALL programs, teachers need to direct students to work on computers. The findings responded to the second research question and demonstrated how teachers directed students to work on CALL programs and the benefits that teachers’ direction could bring. The ways of teachers’ directions including guiding students to work individually and then work in pairs or groups to discuss their work or findings on the computer can be adopted by teachers in other language learning contexts because all kinds of EFL learners need to be supported in CALL environments as they may not be familiar with what and how they should work with CALL programs.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that it is crucial for teachers to provide various types of support for students when they work on computers in pre-sessional courses, as in other CALL contexts. When such support is available, students’ motivation in using computers for their language study will be increased. This study on a pre-sessional context supports and further develops the findings from the literature that a helpful way of using computers in learning is to offer instruction and support from teachers. This study has added detailed evidence of teachers’ support and positive perspectives of these factors in listening and speaking practice context. The results of this study have enriched CALL research and further developed principles relating to teacher support in the CALL context. It has shown the necessity of teachers’ monitoring and support process in listening and speaking practice, which is similar to other language teaching context.

The findings in this study suggest that, in order to enhance student motivation and efficient work on the computer, firstly, teacher should be familiar with CALL programs/tasks used in class and ready to offer effective feedback on students’ questions. Secondly, teachers can prepare some questions to monitor students’ CALL work and process. Thirdly, teachers can provide some task sheets to facilitate students to comprehend CALL tasks. Teachers can also ask students to present their findings or understandings of CALL tasks. Finally, teachers can organize peer or group activities to discuss their CALL tasks, which can help students share their findings and understandings of their CALL work. This study has provided some examples, including samples of questions and tasks for teachers to consider when interacting with students in the CALL context. These motivational factors from teacher support in listening and speaking context which are all general suggestions could be applied to other types of learners in their language courses with CALL programs. This indicates the possibility of the transferability of findings in this study to the wider CALL community.
Although teachers’ direction may be well-established, there are still a large number of teachers who do not know how to direct students to work on a variety of CALL programs. This can be also seen in Web 2.0 environments which provide more advanced tools and platforms for language teaching and learning, teachers still have to design tasks, give feedback and direct students to work on these platforms in an efficient way. Otherwise, these advanced tools may not be used effectively by their students as they may not be aware of what and how to use Web 2.0 environments to enhance their language learning. This article reminds and prompts teachers with examples to direct and motivate students to work in all sorts of CALL environments. It is expected that the findings of this article will contribute to the discussion of motivational factors from teacher support in CALL including Web 2.0 use and appeal to teachers to use CALL in their language teaching.

The pre-sessional English courses cover academic English but also include general English which is similar to other general EFL learners. The students in the pre-sessional courses were adult learners. The majority of them had completed their undergraduate study and were about to enroll postgraduate study, which means that they might have had a high level of English. Despite this, they still needed teacher support when they used CALL programs, supports Stepp-Greany’s (2002) study in a low level of foreign language learning context with CALL. This indicates that whatever the level of English, learners may need teacher support in CALL environments. Although due to different learning purposes or levels, the pre-sessional adult EFL learners might be different from EFL young learners and they might be highly motivated and autonomous to take more responsibility in their learning than young learners, these characteristics in CALL situations for all EFL learners should be similar. That is to say, all levels of EFL learners should be provided similar motivational opportunities to copy with their development of language skills in the CALL context, regardless of independence or learner maturity.

In addition, these examples of support are generalizable because they are not specific to a particular CALL program and they are common practices. It would be possible to apply these examples of support in other language learning contexts and for students in all kinds of levels. Not only can teachers in pre-sessional English course contexts use the examples of support suggested in this study, teachers in other language contexts who want to use any sorts of CALL programs including software, online or blended programs can also adopt such support to reinforce the effect of using the technology. Even though in Web 2.0 environments with more advanced technological tools or programs, teachers still need to provide constant support.

Accordingly, the lessons learned from this study are that, in order to help students develop their language skills with CALL programs in any language context and provide more motivational opportunities, teachers need to consider planning activities and ways of delivering feedback. The positive effects of using computers for the development of language skills in any CALL environment are most likely increased by such constant support from teachers. All this teacher support will turn into additional motivational factors to help students work on CALL tasks continuously and effectively.

However, this can raise another concern about teacher training, that is, teachers should be trained to learn how to use computer technology in their language teaching, how to interact with students and how to guide and give feedback to students in the CALL context before they use any CALL packages and Web 2.0 tools. No matter what level of advanced technology occurring for language teaching
and learning, the first step of teachers’ training should not be ignored. Otherwise, it cannot stimulate teachers’ enthusiasm to use more highly developed computer technology. Therefore, the findings in this study might affect the determination of the use of CALL programs in pre-sessional courses in higher education context, or other language learning contexts and the design of CALL programs. This is because teachers’ support could motivate students to work on CALL tasks and enhance students’ learning practice on computers, whereas the effect of students’ work alone on the CALL tasks could be impaired without teacher support. Although the designers of the CALL programs wish to help learners develop their language skills individually on computers, a consideration of motivational factors by teacher support should be taken into account. Thus, it can be suggested that it could be possible for the designer of CALL programs to prepare teachers’ notes including suggested various support and activities from this study in order to help teachers effectively apply CALL programs in any language learning contexts. The institutions should take into account the motivational factors of teacher feedback and provide training or at least suggested activities with various ways of delivery of feedback as found in this study for teachers to have a good plan used in the computer lab, rather than simply push teachers to use CALL programs for their students. Teachers may also need to consider a good plan and these motivational factors with relevant activities discovered in this study to improve their delivery of feedback and support their students’ work on CALL programs. All such support could motivate language learners to use CALL programs more successfully.

Notes on contributor

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References


Appendix 1. A questionnaire to students at university language center for using computers to develop listening and speaking skills in pre-sessional English courses

(1) How often do you use computers for ESL activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>Every 2–3 days</th>
<th>About once a week</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of class</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Where do you use the computer for developing listening and speaking skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At language center</th>
<th>On campus outside language centre</th>
<th>At home</th>
<th>Other: Please specify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>in class</td>
<td>out of class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) What do you do during the process to complete tasks/activities for listening and speaking with the computer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listen and do activities</th>
<th>Listen and take notes for academic purpose</th>
<th>Repetition</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) How do you use the computer to develop listening and speaking skills in class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s direction</th>
<th>Self-study</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) How often do you get feedback for listening and speaking activities/tasks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>From the computer</td>
<td>From your tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>From the computer</td>
<td>From your tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From partners in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(6) How do you prefer to obtain feedback on computer-based tasks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>From the computer</th>
<th>From the tutor</th>
<th>From your partner</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(7) How much progress have you made in listening and speaking skills with the use of computers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(8) Which way do you think you make more improvements in using computers for developing listening and speaking skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher’s directions in class</th>
<th>Self-study</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(9) Do you like using the computer to develop your listening and speaking skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes, a little</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(10) Computers are useful for improving listening and speaking skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(11) If you would be willing to be interviewed about your use of computers for listening and speaking, please leave your contact details:

Name: _____ Telephone: _____ E-mail: ______

Thank you
Appendix 2. Interview questions for teachers

1. (i) What kinds of computer software and online programs do you have for developing students’ listening and speaking skills in your ESL course?
   (ii) How do you use them?
2. (i) Do you use tasks in the use of computer software or the Internet to develop listening or speaking skills?
   (ii) If so, what kinds of computer-based tasks do you use?
3. (i) How do you use tasks with the computer software or the Internet in class to develop listening and speaking skills?
   (ii) Why do you do some particular tasks? What’s the goal for tasks?
   (iii) What tasks do you think work really well? Why?
4. (i) What kinds of interaction do you have for listening and speaking?
   (ii) What student–student interaction and student–teacher interaction look like with the use of computer technologies?
   (iii) How can you give feedback to students?
5. (i) Why do you use computers to develop listening and speaking in the UK?
   (ii) What do you think of the learning outcomes and benefits of using the computer as a tool to support listening and speaking skills?
6. Are there disadvantages in using computers for developing listening and speaking skills? Can you give some examples?
7. (i) How much do you like using computer-based tasks to develop ESL students’ listening and speaking skills?
   (ii) Which computer program and computer-based tasks do you prefer and why?
8. What are your suggestions and perspective for the potential use of computers in developing listening and speaking skills in TESOL course in future?

Appendix III. Interview questions for students

1. (i) What kinds of computer software and online programs do you have for developing listening and speaking skills in your English learning?
   (ii) How do you use them?
2. (i) Do you use tasks in the use of computer software or the Internet to develop listening or speaking skills?
   (ii) If so, what kinds of computer-based tasks do you use?
3. (i) How do you use tasks/activities when you use the computer software or the Internet in ESL class for developing listening and speaking skills?
   (ii) Why do you do some particular tasks?
   (iii) What tasks do you think work really well? Why?
4. (i) What kinds of interaction do you have to develop listening and speaking skills?
   (ii) What student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction look like in using computers?
   (iii) What kinds of interaction do you think is good?
5. (i) How do you get feedback in the use of computer software or the Internet to develop listening and speaking skills?
   (ii) Which one do you prefer? Why?
6. Do you think you are making improvements in listening and speaking with the use of computer software or the Internet? Can you give some examples of changes?
7. How much do you like using computer-based tasks to develop listening and speaking skills? Which computer program and computer-based tasks do you prefer and why?
8. What are your suggestions and perspectives for the potential use of computers to develop listening and speaking skills in ESL learning in future?