Chapter One: Introduction
1.1 Background of the Study

Computer has undoubtedly made a remarkable contribution in the teaching of subjects. It has offered valuable service to the learners and provided them with a powerful motivating force for a productive study. The rapid development of computer technology together with the use of computers by linguists and literary researchers have paved the way for introducing computer in language teaching and learning. With the advent of Internet and multimedia, studies in recent years (Ali, & Yacob, 2010; Ercetin, 2010; Kilickaya, 2010, AbuSeileek, 2011, AbuSeileek, 2012) have shown an explosion of interest in using computers for foreign language teaching and learning.

Computer technology has become an important tool in the teaching and learning process. The advent of new technologies in learning process is always exciting. They add new dimensions to the class and spark students to a higher level of motivation and achievement. Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) gives some impetus to both the teacher and the student. For the former, it makes the course design easier, and for the latter, it creates numerous possibilities for active interaction and offers larger horizons to be directly involved in new concepts and ways of thinking (Panourgia, n.d).

In the second half of the 20th century, education technologies were one of the most developed areas in the world. Computers, which were introduces at school life in the late 1950s in developed countries, have entered schools in all parts of the world. Today, they have become more powerful, faster, easier to use, more convenient and cheaper, and their capacity to store data has increased tremendously. Equipment such as hard disks, CD ROMs, laser disks and
printers used with computers has also developed rapidly. Using these, a computer program can handle sound, pictures and video (Gündüz, 2005).

The spread of computers has rapidly developed in the field of computer technology. Computers have decreased in price dramatically over the last ten years. At the same time, they have become much more powerful, yet smaller in size, more adaptable, more flexible, and easier to use. As a result, schools and governments have devoted resources to ‘computer literacy’, or knowledge about computers and computing (Ahmad, Corbett, Rogers, & Sussex, 1985). Today, we are living in an era where changes occur very rapidly. The nature and direction of changes taking place around the world, and more precisely within the educational system, reinforce the need for a new approach based mainly on the recent technologies of only the last few decades. Such an approach is CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) and it describes the use of a computer as part of a language course. CALL seeks to employ computers in order to improve language-learning techniques. CALL spans the range of activities learning in language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and draws from nearly all areas of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (John Nerbonne, n.d).

Inventions that are more technical have taken their place among the educational aids with which teachers surround themselves, to make their teaching more effective. What distinguishes the computers from other technological aids, such as tape recorders and film projectors, and what forms in fact the basis of its being an educational aid, is its interactive capability?

According to Nelson, Ward, & Kaplow (1976) the unique property of the computer as a medium for education is its ability to interact with the student. Books and tape recordings can tell a student what the rules are and what the right solutions are, but they cannot analyze the specific mistake the
student has made and react in a manner, which leads him not only to correct his mistake, but also to understand the principles behind the correct solution.

The computer revolution, as it is commonly known, is more than just a technological development. It may well change society as radically as did the industrial revolution. In recent years, the computer has established itself as an important feature of modern life. It is no longer a large, expensive machine used exclusively by specialists in major industrial corporations, government departments and military organizations. Many of us use computers daily. Banking, traffic control, word processing, social security applications, accounting and record-keeping, design, office management, computer games, various hobbies—these are merely a few of the applications where computers are now a part of our everyday life (Ahmad, Greville, Rogers & Sussex 1985).

CALL is an approach to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement, and assessment of material to be learned, usually including substantial interactive elements (Byram, 2004, p. 90).

Computer technology has become an important tool in the teaching & learning process and in students’ learning and their achievement in schools today. Bright (1987) believes that teaching and learning are difficult goals to achieve, and that the computer opens new ways for working for the achievement of these goals. Furthermore, Lockard, Abrams, & Many (1997) believe that the computer is an inescapable component of changes now facing education in the United States, indeed throughout the world (p. 4). The computer is an important tool that provides an educational environment with virtual situations that students can apply to real life.

Computers with their prominent features attract many teachers and experts to use them for improving the learning effects. Using computers in
teaching language is an innovation compared to the traditional teaching methods. Conventional language teaching relies on the teachers themselves, i.e. teacher-centered instructions. Although they do have some visual aids as a facilitating device, they would rather adopt the long-adopted Grammar-Translation approach in the classroom environment in order to save troubles without resorting much to other media. Therefore, the use of computers will give the students other encouragement upon learning a language. CALL enhances the motivation level of students (Lu, 2004).

CALL may be defined as the search and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning (Levy, 1997). It means learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies. (Egbert, 2005) CALL is widely used to refer to the area of technology and second language teaching and learning (Chapelle, 2001).

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 uses have expanded so dramatically that the majority of language teachers must now begin to think about the implications of computers for language learning (Warschauer, 1996). Research in the field of computer-assisted language learning has certainly developed in the last 20 years (Warschauer, 1996, 2000; Chapelle, 1998, 2000; Levy, 2000, 1997; Chapelle, & Hegelheimer, 2000; Kern, 1995; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Dunkel, 1991).

The use of computer technology in the field of second/foreign language instruction is intertwined with the use of CALL. ICT is one of many tools that have been appropriated for use by teachers for the purpose of learning & teaching. However, ICT requires specific training in order for teachers to
become competent and successful in utilizing it to its fullest potential (Abu Samak, 2006).

There is no doubt that just as the computer has established itself firmly in the world of business and communication technology, it has also succeeded in acquiring a fundamental role in the educational process (Dhaif, 2004).

In the Middle East, numerous international initiatives, such as the United Nations Development Program, have sought to help Arab countries embrace modernization by bringing about reforms in their educational systems (Information and Communication Technology for Development in Arab Region (ICTDAR, 2005). Consistent with these efforts, King Abdullah II of Jordan in 1999 initiated the installation of ICT in all schools throughout the kingdom in an attempt to make the country the "IT hub" of the Middle East. (Jordanian Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 1)

English as a foreign language (EFL) indicates the use of English in a non–English-speaking region. Study can occur either in the student's home country, as part of the normal school curriculum or otherwise, or, for the more privileged minority, in an Anglophone country that they visit as a sort of educational tourist, particularly immediately before or after graduating from university. TEFL is the teaching of English as a foreign language note that this sort of instruction can take place in any country, English-speaking or not. Typically, EFL is learned either to pass exams as a necessary part of one's education, or for career progression while working for an organization or business with an international focus. EFL may be part of the state school curriculum in countries where English has no special status.

According to Nerbonne (n.d) foreign and second language learning is studied in applied linguistics; a distinction is drawn between foreign language
learning, which normally takes place in classrooms, and always remote from extensive natural opportunity to use the foreign language, and second language learning, which occurs in a “naturalistic” environment, normally in a country where the language is spoken.

Lim-k (n.d) states that in recent years, there has been much research about various aspects of teaching and learning a second language. One of the most significant recent developments impacting on teachers and learners in language education programs is educational technology, in particular the use of the computer in the language classroom (Chapelle, 2000; Levy, 2000; Warschauer, 2000). CALL has much more of a focus on non-native speakers, and embraces a wide variety of languages; this certainly includes English (Levy and Hubbard, 2005).

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education has realized the importance of such pedagogical advantages for CALL and paced a broad leap towards its implementation. It has adopted a two-fold strategy for the improvement of teaching English as a foreign language: teaching English language from the first grade and using computer as a major tool in teaching, which includes computerizing textbooks (Ministry of Education, 2003). Thereupon, many schools are provided with computer laboratories. Students and teachers have been trained to use them. Many of these schools are also connected with the Internet (AbuSeileek, 2004).

Computers have emerged as fascinating technological tools in the educational arena. Their use in classrooms as a tool for teaching holds a great significance for language learning. Using computers in language learning can go a long way in developing study skills in learners of English as a foreign language.
Computers and language learning are closely inter-related and their judicious integration can enable students to organize and process their knowledge at the touch of a keyboard button. This innovative approach to language learning, which is a variation from the conventional classroom based-instruction, will definitely yield exciting and rewarding results in language teaching (Jayachandran, 2007).

The use of computers by non-native speakers has become vital in learning EFL. Researchers and practitioners now realize the important role computers play in learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language and look for effective ways to integrate them into various types of English language courses. Several computer-aided approaches, methods, and techniques have been presented (AbuSeileek, 2006).

Learners’ attitude towards CALL could play an important role in learning of English as a foreign language. A study on learners’ attitude towards CALL could be useful in understanding the relationship between CALL and student proficiency in learning.

Mantle-Bromley (1995) outlines, “What is termed attitude refers to affect and is an evaluative, emotional reaction (i.e., the degree of like, or dislike associated with attitudinal object)” (p. 381).

In the educational field, instructors need to understand learners' attitudes in order to influence students towards achievement (Mager, 1984). Collis & Sakamoto (1996), for example, emphasize that student’s attitudes must receive attention from school staff.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitude is either a favorable or an unfavorable evaluation of an object, idea, or thing, and therefore, students should like, or be positively disposed to, the subject or the activities in the
classroom in order to learn. Miyashita (1991) defined ‘Attitude’ as the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of persons towards a category, class, set of phenomena, or cognitive objects (p. 15).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Current research has not provided sufficient evidence on the influence of learners' attitude towards learning English with computer-assisted language instructions. The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes towards learning of EFL through computer-assisted language learning among a sample of 300 Jordanian English-language students. This study is different from prior studies related to CALL in that it is not concerned with how CALL affects student achievement; instead, learners attitude towards CALL have been investigated in general and, more specifically, towards learning EFL via CALL.

Objectives of the study can be outlined as follows:

The general goal of this study is to explore the role of computers and how best they can be used to support teaching and learning of EFL and to investigate the merits and demerits of CALL in learning of EFL. More specifically, this study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore EFL learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL in general.
2. To investigate EFL learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on gender.
3. To find out EFL learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on level of the study.
4. To investigate EFL learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on interaction between gender and level of the study.
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1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of learners towards learning EFL via CALL?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) in learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on gender?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) in learners’ attitudes towards learning EFL via CALL based on level of the study?
4. Are there any statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) in learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on interaction between gender and level of the study?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

This study hypothesizes the following:

1. The Null Hypothesis (H₀) of the study assumes that there are no statistically significant differences in learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL in general.
2. The Null Hypothesis (H₀) of the study assumes that there are no statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) in learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on gender.
3. The Null Hypothesis (H₀) of the study assumes that there are no statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) in learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on level of study.
4. The Null Hypothesis (H₀) of the study assumes that there are no statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) in learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on interaction between gender and level of study.
1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study stems from the fact that most related studies of ESL/EFL, have been conducted with a view to investigate the role of CALL in Learning EFL, and to identify the EFL learners’ attitude towards learning EFL through CALL.

For instance, Warschauer (1996) surveyed learners’ feelings and attitude towards computer writing and e-mail communications, integrating the issue of computer writing and CMC. Almahboub (2000) examined attitudes towards computers and gender differences of sixth-grade Kuwaiti students. Beazley (2000) investigated how 761 females and males used Web sites for courses and their attitudes at a large public university. Cunningham (2000) investigated students' attitudes towards the word processing experience in the EFL writing classes. AbuSeileek (2004) conducted a study to explore the effect of a CALL program on students' writing ability in English by teaching the program cooperatively and collectively. Almekhlafi (2004) conducted a study on independent CALL use by elementary school students in the United Arab Emirates. It investigated the effect of CALL on students' achievement of EFL and their attitudes towards CALL use.

However, this study is unlike the above mentioned studies. This study is not concerned with how CALL affects student achievement; instead, the researcher investigates learners’ attitudes towards CALL in general and, more specifically, towards learning EFL via CALL.

Furthermore, this study is significant because it is a serious attempt in getting a better understanding of the role of computers and how they can be used to support teaching and learning of EFL.
Moreover, the importance of the study is embedded in its findings, which may give insightful remarks into the nature of the EFL learners’ attitude associated with the use of computer in the process of English language learning.

The importance of this study also lies in the fact that it is expected to be a good source of valuable information for the EFL Arab teachers of English as a foreign language in general and the teachers of English in Jordan in particular, because this information is necessary to provide a better understanding to the EFL learners’ attitudes towards learning EFL through CALL.

In addition, the findings of this study also are beneficial for educators and scholars in the field of EFL as well as in the field of CALL. Little is known about EFL education in the Middle East and technology integration in EFL instruction in public schools in the region. This lack of research creates obstacles for the improvement of English curricula and teaching practices that incorporate the modern tools of instructional technology.

This study may provide a clear picture to teachers and educational supervisors by conveying to them the importance of the learners’ attitude towards learning EFL through CALL. It is also expected that to be a good source of knowledge for language curricula designers.

Finally, the result of this study may also help interested people in the field of EFL learning to have a better understanding of the process of language learning or acquisition.
1.6 Problem of the Study

In the educational field of EFL, learners use computers for learning English language; computers offer them various activities for developing different language skills.

EFL learners face many difficulties in learning language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (AbuSeileek, 2004). Curricula designers emphasize that modern technology should be actively employed in education in order to achieve its utmost goals, both as a process and ultimate aims of education. At the same time, English has become an international language for communication and information, especially in technology. Students of all academic levels are the largest population to use the Internet for educational and personal purposes. At the same time, they are expected to employ their knowledge in the foreign language – English - they learn, in real life communication through the Internet (Jafar, 2008).

Using computers in teaching language is an innovation compared to the traditional teaching methods. Computers with their prominent features, attract many teachers and experts to use them in improving the learning effects (Lu, 2004).

Computer technology has become an important tool in the teaching process and in students’ learning as well as their attitudes and achievements in schools today. It is crucial to learn how students feel towards learning EFL via CALL in their classrooms. However, the learners’ attitude towards CALL could play an important role in learning of EFL.

Lee (2000) suggests that there are many reasons that network-based technology, if appropriately utilized, should be implemented. The first is experiential learning through using the vast resources offered on the World
Wide Web. Raising EFL students’ motivation above that which is required to pass a test is a major obstacle, and CALL can increase motivation and enhance students’ achievement by affecting students’ attitude and helping them feel more independent. The problem of this study lies in knowing whether the EFL students who already use computer technology in learning EFL hold positive or negative attitudes with regard to their gender and level of the study.

Unfortunately, researchers and scholars within Jordan lack important information in this area and to date; it seems a lack of studies on learners’ attitude towards CALL among the population in Jordan. For this reason, a research study which investigates CALL and its role in learning of EFL and learners' attitude towards CALL in Jordan may provide an empirical base for future studies on EFL learners’ attitude towards CALL.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Needless to say that having limitations are very normal thing to every study because they are inevitable to every research. Therefore, it is useful to reveal some of these limitations to show as to what challenges the researcher experienced while conducting this study. We have investigated learners’ attitude towards learning EFL via CALL based on gender and age among a sample of 300 students’ (males & females) from Discovery Schools (DSs) in Jordan, who learn English as a foreign language via CALL. This study conducted on the Tenth and Seventh Grades whose first language is Arabic and the foreign language is English in Discovery Schools (DSs) at First and Third Amman Directorate of Education in the academic year 2010/2011. Therefore, the results cannot be completely generalized beyond its sample groups.
1.8 Definition of Terms

Many of the terms that appear in this study have been used as instruments for the study, and it is therefore important to define them based on their use in the present study.

1. Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) is an approach to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement, and assessment of material to be learned.

2. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is spoken in countries where the English language does not play any crucial role in social life and the average person does not need English for his/her daily routine activities or even in his professional life and interaction, English is only taught in schools or other institutions of higher learning as a subject of noteworthy significance.

3. Attitude: It refers to affect and is an evaluative, emotional reaction (i.e., the degree of like, or dislike associated with attitudinal object.

4. Discovery Schools (DSs): These schools are government schools provided with a computer laboratory that contain computers equipped with up-to-date software packages and linked with the Internet.

5. Level of the study: For the purpose of this study, the students are categorized into two academic levels of education: (1) the school students of seventh grades; and (2) the school students of tenth grades; include male and female students.