

Barriers to CALL Implementation in Written Expression Courses: EFL Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

This research endeavor seeks to identify the perceived Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) obstacles faced by teachers of Written Expression Courses at the level of the department of English, Guelma, Algeria. For that sake and in an attempt to answer our research questions: What are the barriers that hinder EFL written expression teachers from the integration of CALL in their teaching practices? What recommendations can be given to overcome these barriers? Therefore, the quantitative questionnaire was used as a main research tool. It is chosen to elicit the participants' perceptions, perspectives, and viewpoints. The research sample includes a number of seven participants of those who are teaching or had previously taught this module. The statistical results highlight the conclusion that the respondents' most reported CALL barriers are extrinsic rather than being intrinsic. They mainly include: English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' resistance to change, lack of technical support, lack of training, and insufficient time in the Written Expression session.

Keywords: CALL, challenges, innovative teaching methodologies, reforms

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Introduction

Recently, the advent of computer technology along with the growing use of the internet has resulted in inevitable ongoing changes at the level of educational frameworks. Therefore, researchers, scholars, and educational stakeholders have shown an increasing interest for the incorporation of CALL programs at the level of the EFL teaching-learning process. However, the integration of the new technology in the EFL teaching is not without problems. EFL teachers in general and written expression teachers in particular in their way for the innovative integration of CALL in their teaching practices have faced various significant barriers. Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify and uncover what are these barriers and challenges from the perspective of written expression teachers of Guelma University.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is often perceived as an approach to language teaching and learning in which the computer is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement, and assessment of material going to be learned (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2011). Levy (1997) has also stated that CALL is more extensively defined as the search for computer application in language teaching and learning. The two terms Computer-Assisted Language Instruction (CALI) and Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) were used instead of CALL before the early 1980s (Davies & Higgins, 1982). From the early 1990s, alternative terms such as Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) has also emerged.

1.2. Computer Assisted Language Learning: A Historical Overview

Warschauer and Healey (1998) have claimed that the history of CALL can be divided into three main phases: behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. The point that has to be stressed is that the development of CALL was parallel to the advances taking place in the field of language teaching in many ways.

To begin with, the behavioristic CALL came into being in the 1960s and the 1970s with the emergence of the Audio-lingual Method of language teaching. At this CALL phase, repetitive drills, and grammar instructions were emphasized (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Then, Communicative CALL has been introduced in the 1980s. During that period, the behaviorist approaches and theories were rejected then being replaced by the Communicative Language Teaching. Thus, Communicative CALL advocated the use of programs that are based on authentic communications. Subsequently, the Integrative CALL has emerged in the 1990s where the emphasis was given to language use in authentic social contexts. For Warschauer (1996), this phase is “based on two technological developments of the last decade-multimedia computers and the internet” (p.7).

1.3. Barriers to CALL Implementation in Education

The concept “barriers” can be considered as “any condition that makes it difficult to make progress or to achieve an objective” (Schoepp, 2005, p.2). In our case of the present study, barriers are used to refer to all the factors or obstacles that can hinder teachers from the process of the

successful implementation of CALL and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education.

Several authors in the CALL literature have documented for the existence of various classifications regarding the barriers to technologies integration in the educational setting. According to Ertmer (1999), CALL or ICT barriers fall into two main types: first-order (extrinsic) barriers referring to the lack of time, lack of technical support, limited resources, technical problems, and second-order (intrinsic) barriers including attitudes, beliefs, practices and resistance to change. Hendren (2000, as cited in Al-Alwani, 2005) has further asserted that the extrinsic factors are allotted to organizations, while intrinsic barriers are pertaining to teachers in terms of their emotional, personal perspectives. Likewise, Becta (2004) has later on grouped the barriers into: the teacher-level barriers as lack of confidence, lack of teacher competence, resistance to change, and negative attitudes. Whilst, the school level barriers include lack of time, lack of effective training, lack of accessibility to resources, and lack of technical support. In his study, Balanskat et al (2006) has added another division on the basis on whether the barriers are at the teachers' individual level (micro level barriers) or at the institutional level (meso level barriers). A further taxonomy that is based on material (e.g. insufficient number of computer) and non-material barriers (e.g. teachers' insufficient knowledge and skills) has been also provided by Pelgrum (2001).

2. Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present research study is to identify and uncover the common CALL implementation obstacles and challenges faced by EFL written expression teachers, and to attempt to find out suggestions and recommendations that can help them overcome hindrances in their CALL-based teaching practices.

3. Research Questions

The present research study attempts at addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the barriers that hinder EFL written expression teachers from the integration of CALL in their teaching practices?
2. What recommendations can be given to overcome these barriers?

4. Research Methodology

For the sake of achieving the objectives and answering the research questions, a type of quantitative research design has been adopted in this study. A questionnaire is chosen to be used as a data collection tool. The rationale behind utilizing this research instrument is because the questionnaire is considered as a popular and most frequent research tool used to elicit information about the informants' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions (Mackey & Grass, 2005, p.92). In this regard, the questionnaire linked to this inquiry is targeted to account for teachers' perceptions for the obstacles that hinder them from CALL implementation in their teaching. The questionnaire of the overall number of 19 question items is composed of three main sections. The first is with five questions dealing with teachers' background information. The second is devoted to teachers' computer use and familiarity, including seven question items within it. Finally, the last section which is composed of seven questions tackles teachers' perceived barriers to CALL implementation by the adoption of Likert scale.

5. Findings and Discussions

The following section is devoted to the presentation of the results of the study and the analysis and interpretation of its findings.

Table 1: *Teachers' Background Information*

Items	Answers
Q1. Age	-Ranging from 30 to 45 years old
Q2. Teachers' Qualification	- ALL of them with MA degree
Q3. Teaching Experience	-Ranging from 5 to 10 years
Q4. Modules being taught	-Written Expression, Grammar, Civilization, Testing and Evaluation, Literature, Research Methodology
Q5. Teaching Experience of Written Expression Module	-Ranging from 2 to 8 years

As it is displayed in the previous table 1, the results dealing with teachers' background information or personal profile indicate that the respondents' age ranges between 30 to 45 years old. As far as the teaching qualification is concerned, all of the informants admit that they have already been post-graduated with an MA degree and most of them are inscribed for a PhD qualification. This implies that the sample teachers hold adequate academic degree that meets their position requirements. The data also shows that the respondents have been working from five to 10 years teaching at department of English in general and from two to eight years teaching Written Expression module in particular. In addition to many other modules that have been assigned for them such as: Grammar, Civilization, Testing and Evaluation, Literature, Research Methodology. This finding is also representative in a way that it reflects that the teaching staff members have a rich and varied professional teaching experience. The other assumption that might be suggested is that written expression module seemingly appears to be undertaken by the same group of teachers because of the heavy experience that some have held.

Table 2: *Teachers' CALL Ownership*

Question Item	a) Yes	b) No
Q6. Do you have a personal computer?	100%	00%
Q7. How long have you been using computer devices?	8, 12, 13, 15, and 20 years	

When being asked about the computer ownership and for how much time it has been used. In response and as it was expected, all teachers admit that they do use it since from eight to 20 years. Results for both questions (Q6 and Q7) reveal that the sample under study have been using computer device for a potentially very long period of time and this reflects its ease of access, and widespread of use in the era of technology explosion.

Table 3: *Teachers' Computer Skills*

Question Item	a) Poor	b) Moderate	c) Advanced
Q8. How do you evaluate your computer skills?	00%	71.4%	28.5%

As presented in table 3, the participants are also requested to denote the level at which they can classify or evaluate their overall computer skills or computer literacy. Items are presented on a proposed scale containing three options. Surprisingly, no participant has opted for the first option and rated himself as being “poor”. The overwhelming majority (71.4%) has rated themselves with a “moderate” level; whereas, only 2 respondents with a significant percentage of 28.5% have pointed out to their computer literacy level as being “advanced”. This signifies the fact that the target teachers do possess a relatively acceptable level of technological skills and computer knowledge and this significant piece of information shows a considerable divergence with what has been previously stated in the literature review i.e. teachers’ lack of computer literacy.

Table 4: *Frequency of CALL Use in Different Contexts*

Question Items	a)Always	b)Sometimes	c)Rarely	d)Never
Q9. How often do you use the computer for educational purposes outside classroom?	71.4%	28.5%	00%	00%
Q11. How often do you use the computer for educational purposes inside classroom?	00%	42.8%	42.8%	14.2%

Both question items (Q9, Q11) aim to make a sort of comparison between the frequency of computer use to achieve educational purposes at the level of two different contexts or environments i.e. inside the educational classroom and outside it. The obtained responses represented in table 4 indicate that more than half of the informants (71.4%) declared that they always use the computer to serve their academic needs outside the classrooms. Similarly, 28.5% of them have stated that they sometimes do for the same purposes and by keeping the same context. Notably, none of them have opted for “rarely” or “never” options.

When shifting the context to utilizing the computer as a pedagogical aid within the classroom, a sort of variation arises: 14.2 % have responded by “never”, 42.8% is an identical percentage for the couple of choices “sometimes”, and “rarely”. Abruptly, none of them has ticked the “always” option. Hence, this implies that the computer as an educational tool does not sound as a threatening issue for teachers because to a certain extent they have desire, readiness, and willingness to incorporate it in their teaching practices; however, it tends to be less frequently used within the educational setting than outside it. This kind of comparison of frequency of use results in an emerging sort of contradiction that might be attributed to existence of a number of factors that might have hindered written expression teachers from CALL implementation in their EFL classrooms. This tendency is going to be further investigated within the follow-up questions of the next section.

Table 5: *Reasons for Using CALL inside and outside Classroom*

Q10. Reasons for using CALL for educational purposes outside class	Course preparation, supervision purposes, PhD research, and email communication
Q12. Reasons for using CALL for educational purposes inside class	Lesson presentation through data-show, checking electronic dictionary, using videos

Table 5 serves to state the reasons for which university written expression teachers use CALL as a supplement for their teaching practices. Among the reasons they mentioned are: lesson

presentation through data-show, checking electronic dictionary, and using videos at the level of the educational classroom. On the other hand, Course preparation, supervision purposes, PhD research, and email communication outside it. In this regard, it can be assumed that our sample teachers are aware of the significant importance and the potential role that CALL can play in their teaching process.

Table 6: *CALL Implementation Barriers*

Barriers to Computer technology Implementation	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Q13. Teachers' Lack of computer knowledge and skills	28.5%	00%	71.4%
Q14. Teachers might feel unconfident and anxious on how to use new technologies	28.5%	00%	71.4%
Q15. Most teachers still stick to traditional teaching and refuse to adopt to new changes	100%	00%	00%
Q16. Teachers' negative attitudes towards the implementation of computer technology in their teaching	42.8%	28.5%	28.5%
Q17. Insufficient time during the lesson	57.1%	00%	42.8%
Q18. Lack of technical support and unavailability of technological devices	85.7%	14.2%	00%
Q19. Lack of teachers' effective training programs	57.1%	14.2%	28.5%

The obtained results that are shown in table 6 reflect the distribution of the barriers of EFL written expression teachers to CALL Integration. At the first place comes teachers' resistance to change (100%). Seemingly, all participants do agree upon it as being a key obstacle. The second highest percentage of agreement (85.7%) is given for the lack of technological devices. Thereafter, it comes the percentage 57.1% which is representative for a couple of barriers namely: insufficient time in written expression course and lack of training. All the above mentioned CALL hindrances have been opted for by more than half of the respondents. However, the least chosen barriers from the point of view of less than half of the surveyed teachers are: teachers' lack of computer skills, teachers' negative attitudes, and lack of confidence. They have been respectively represented by these percentages of agreement: 28.5%, 42.8%, and again 28.5%. Therefore, this can be interpreted by the fact that almost all the faced barriers are the result of extrinsic rather than intrinsic factors. That is to say that they are classified as school-level barriers which are to a large extent out of teachers' control instead of being teachers'-level barriers.

Conclusion

Through its statistical findings, the present article concludes that an increasing number of EFL Written Expression teachers are familiar with CALL usage, have a notable access to computer technologies, and a good command of digital skills. However, they still consider CALL-based teaching as a challenging matter because they are confronted with many obstacles and barriers. The ones that are deemed to be more bothersome and most challenging for our sample are: EFL

teachers' resistance to change, lack of technical support, lack of training, and insufficient time in the Written Expression session. Therefore, this particular context calls for taking initiatives for educational implications and pedagogical reforms.

In order to overcome the aforementioned barriers and for the sake of realizing an effective CALL implementation for EFL teaching in general and the writing courses in particular, a number of implications have been suggested to be put into practice. They can be summed up as follows:

1. Attempting to provide sufficient CALL-based materials by the different universities and institutions.
2. Effective training on how to integrate CALL in the educational setting for both teachers and students.
3. Teachers should be more confident and flexible with the innovative teaching methodologies i.e. not to be reluctant to supplement their face-to-face sessions with a certain level of online-based instruction.
4. Teachers should be more organized in their time management skills to succeed in introducing technological aids within their classroom lectures.

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Appendix: Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

1. Your age:
2. What is your highest qualification? a) MA b) PhD Others.....
3. How long have you been teaching at the university?.....years
4. The Modules you are currently teaching.....
5. For how long have you been teaching written expression?.....years

Section Two: Computer Use and Familiarity

6. Do you have a personal computer? a) Yes b) No
7. How long have you been using computer devices?years
8. How do you evaluate your computer skills?
a) Poor b) Moderate c) Advanced
9. How often do you use the computer for educational purposes outside classroom?
a) Always b) Sometimes c) Rarely d) Never
10. Specify for which purposes?
.....
.....
11. How often do you use the computer for educational purposes inside classroom?
a) Always b) Sometimes c) Rarely d) Never
12. Specify for which purposes?
.....
.....

Section Three: Implementation Barriers

Please indicate to what extent do you agree with each of the following statements:

Barriers to Computer technology Implementation	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
13. Teachers' Lack of computer knowledge and skills			
14. Teachers might feel unconfident and anxious on how to use new technologies			
15. Most teachers still stick to traditional teaching and refuse to adopt to new changes			
16. Teachers' negative attitudes towards the implementation of computer technology in their teaching			
17. Insufficient time during the lesson			

18. Lack of technical support and unavailability of technological devices			
19. Lack of teachers' effective training programs			

Thank you