

CALL-based Teaching Methods and Current Assessment Practices: The Mismatch Between CALL-based Teaching and Current Assessment Practices in Algeria

Boukhemis Lina

University of Algiers 2

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Abstract:

In recent years, the field of education has noticed a significant change in the teaching way. Most learners and teachers are favouring Computer Assisted Language learning and teaching methods due to the emergence and quick development of technology. The use of CALL-based teaching has become an inevitable teaching methodology because of its various advantages. This paper investigates the overlap between the CALL-based teaching methods and the current assessment practices at the University of Badji Mokhtar, Algeria. For this purpose, one questionnaire was administered with 15 EFL learners, to investigate their perceptions regarding the current assessment practices and inquire about how they wish to be assessed in a CALL-based classroom. For more validity, an interview was held with 10 EFL teachers to examine their attitudes towards the current assessment practices and what might be more effective for assessing learners in a CALL-based classroom. The findings reveal that both teachers and learners are unsatisfied with the current assessment practices and proclaim an important overlap between CALL-based teaching methods and the current assessment practices. Furthermore, the results denote some suggestions for future assessment practices.

Keywords: CALL-based teaching, Current assessment practices, EFL learners, EFL learners.

Introduction

The teaching and learning process has noticed considerable changes. Cooper (1993), claims that these improvements developed from behaviorism to cognitivism, then, to constructivism, a psychology of learning that introduced the emergence of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). According to Moras (2001), CALL teaching methods represent a new perspective in the teaching and learning process, it emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. However, CALL-based teaching requires more efforts and knowledge of these basic teaching methods. Seljan, Berger, and Dovedan (2002), argue that since computers invaded today's society, introducing them in the formal learning setting became an obligation. Thus, EFL teachers embraced the usage of modern technologies as effective pedagogical teaching means. CALL-based teaching might be applied to teach grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and pronunciation. However, a bridge must be designed in order to overcome the mismatch between CALL-based teaching methods and the current assessment practices.

According to Berry and Adamson (2011), assessment in education consists of collecting systematic and reliable data regarding the learners' performances, understanding, skills, styles, and beliefs concerning their learning process. Educational assessment studies the learners' attainments as well as the learning institutions as a whole. William (2013), reveals that the saddest truth is that students do not completely acquire what is transmitted by the teacher. Thus, assessment is the only means that attempt to measure what has been learned with what has been taught. The primary objective of assessments in Education is to grade students, provide feedback, and learn about their achievements. Moon (2000, p. 148), considers assessment as “something that most teachers spend a lot of time doing.” For this reason, the process of assessment is important to define, realize, administer, and score. Moon (2000, p.148), adds that we have to “consider what kinds of information it provides, and

the decisions that might be taken based on that information.” Because, due to the information it provides, teachers might learn about their students' achievements and provide feedback.

According to Michael Scriven (1967: 41), assessment in education is the 20th-century reform. Berry and Adamson (2011), clarify that the later decades have noticed significant changes in educational assessment. Modern assessment approaches have been introduced in the field of education seeking to enhance the learning quality. These educational reforms in assessment focus on the learners as individuals, the learning institutions, and the educational system as a whole. The reform in Educational assessments seeks to relate the CALL-based teaching environment with the most effective assessment techniques that would satisfy the demands of the modernized learning environments.

I Literature Review

According to Davies et al. (1999), assessment is vital in the teaching and learning process for both learners and teachers as it provides information on learners' signs of progress, lacks, and the effectiveness of the teachers' methodology. However, Lopez (2008a), argues that educational assessments are mostly viewed as a sequential testing to determine who succeeded and who did not succeed or to frighten the learners. According to Dahalan and Hussain (2010), Malaysian educational institutions view educational assessment as a teaching and learning strategy and not as a supplementary task since it can not be detached from the teaching and learning process. The main objectives of educational assessments are to report information concerning the learners' achievements, needs, teachers' methodologies, and curriculum effectiveness. Educational assessments have two major functions, assessment of learning or summative assessment, which is the most used one, and assessment for learning or formative assessment. Stiggins (2002), argues that both functions provide useful information that helps both learners and teachers. Myran and

Workman (2002), add that school-based assessment identify the potential progress and to architect future educational plans. According to Martel and Calderon (2005), assessment allows a continuous decision-making about the teaching and learning process.

In the educational system Cooper (1993), claims that the reforms in the teaching and learning process give space to the incorporations of computers in a formal learning setting. The arrival of computer in formal learning settings was in the early 60s. According to Ahmad, Corbett, Rogers and Sussex (1985), computer usage in a formal language learning setting would provide teachers with a potential flexibility to afford authentic teaching materials. However, Garrett (1991, p. 75), claims that "the use of the computer does not constitute a method". But, it represents a "medium in which a variety of methods, approaches, and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented." According to Lepper and Gurtner (1989), CALL was first used, it was considered as an aid to teacher instruction. It developed from CAI which stands for Computer Assisted Instruction. Mathes, Torgese, and Allor (2001), assert that CAI allows teachers to provide immediate constructive feedback. Furthermore, Bangs and Cantos (2004), argue that computer assistance in foreign language acquisition is a necessity in the era of technology.

Moreover, Bagheri, Roohani, and Ansari (2012), add that introducing the use of technology and internet in the education system enhance additional language acquisition. However, Davies, Hewer, Rendall, and Walker (2004), claim that the emergence of personal computers (pc) in the 1970s increased the development of CAI and resulted in the new term Computer Assisted Language Learning. However, the theory of CALL focuses on student-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness. The purpose of CALL programs according to Bagheri, Roohani, and Ansari (2012), was to stimulate learners responsibility and active engagement in the learning process. By the 1980s, CALL programs became widespread

and were used in the teaching of diverse skills in language education. Additionally, CALL programs attracted several researchers' attention and became the area of interest for further investigations. Bagheri, Roohani, and Ansari (2012), highlight that integrating CALL programs in formal learning settings to enhance language acquisition developed significantly during the last years. However, in Iran, it is still limited in the foreign language learning milieu.

Berry and Adamson (2011), report that in 2002, the Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council labelled *Learning to Learn: The Way Forward in Curriculum Development*, delineate the conventional approaches to educational assessment. For the purpose of emphasizing assessment for learning and diminishing the scope of assessment of learning as the former aims at determining the learners' needs and effective ways of providing constructive feedback. According to Berry and Adamson (2011), the assessment strategies directly impact the educational procedures. They highlight that the major aim of the assessment is to report on the learners' outcomes and goals' achievements to enhance the learning process. The need for rethinking the assessment procedures become vital in education. Moreover, Mendoza and Arandia (2009), investigate teachers' perceptions regarding language assessment practices in Colombia. The findings reveal that teachers ask for effective "teacher training" in language assessment in order to architect assessment practices that would enhance learners' learning and motivate them. Berry and Adamson (2011), emphasize the idea that assessment designers are considered as those who control the education system.

According to King (1997), the significant development in the educational system is the integration of technology and especially in assessment. Moreover, Bennett (2001), explains that the concept of web-based assessment is seen as "interactive, broadband, networked, and standard-based" tools. Further, Fleischman and Lockward (2001), convey that the use of web-based assessment affords various advantages for both learners and teachers, as it increases the learners'

opportunities for practice, self-assessment, and regulation, just as, it allows teachers to gather immediate feedback, gain time, and stimulates their interactions with their students. In addition, Morgan and O'Reilly (2001), argue that web-based assessment usage enables teachers to incorporate several content topics, increase their motivation and perceptions regarding the learning process.

According to Bennett and Linn (2001, 2002), web-based assessment usage allows for rapid and immediate feedback. Furthermore, Nguyen and Kulm (2005), claim that web-based assessment represents an automatic evaluative system. Additionally, Liang, Xin & Creasy (2004), argues that a web-based assessment enables teachers to perform both formative and summative tests online for learners. Further, Vendlinski and Stevens (2002), add that a web-based assessment allows teachers and learners to provide and receive feedback, interact and reflect on the results and on the target topic online. Dahalan and Hussain (2010), explains that the concept of Web-based assessment surpasses various assessment tools and represents an effective strategy to depict the learners' lacks and motivate them.

Nguyen, Hsieh, and Allen (2006), investigate the impact of web-based assessment on increasing "middle school students mathematics learning" perceptions. To this end, they used both qualitative and quantitative data, a comparison was made between the perceptions of students who adopted web-based assessment and practice (WP) with those, who received traditional assessment and practice (TP). The results demonstrate that the use of computers increases students' interests and motivation to practice mathematics and developed students' confidence in problem-solving.

II Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The use of Computers has invaded the domain of education, due to its advantages of improving learners outcomes, capturing their attention and enhancing their motivation. However, a great deal exists between the CALL-based teaching methods and the current

assessment practices. The aim of this paper is to provide a clear picture of both learners and teachers' disappointments regarding the current assessment practices in a CALL-based classroom and to afford more effective and reasonable CALL-based assessment methods. This paper seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What is the overlap between CALL-based teaching and the current assessment practices?
2. How do learners perceive the current assessment practices in a CALL-based teaching?
3. What are the teachers perceptions regarding the current assessment practices when adopting CALL-based teaching methods?
4. What type of assessment might be effective and useful in a CALL-based classroom?

III Methodology

A. Method and Design

This research is considered as a descriptive research, the research questions were qualitative in nature. The researcher's objective was to depict the mismatch between using CALL-based teaching methods and the current assessment practices.

B. Sample

The subjects enrolled in the investigation were 15 EFL learners and 10 EFL teachers at the University of Badji Mokhtar Annaba, Algeria. The learners were 8 females and 7 males from the same social background, their ages varied from 19 to 21 years old. While the teachers were 6 females and 4 males and their ages vary from 30 to 45 years old with the same technological basic knowledge.

C. Instruments

Two major instruments have been applied for data collection: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire consists of 10 closed questions in order to guarantee that the questionnaire won't be time-consuming and that the learners won't get bored. The interview

was held with teachers, it consists of 4 open-ended questions to give them space and freedom to provide their opinions.

D. Procedure

This inquiry's aim was to study the overlap between a CALL-based teaching technique and the current assessment practices, at the University of Algeria, for third-year students. Firstly, the researcher has to study the learners' perspectives concerning the CALL-based technique and the current assessment practices. Then, the researcher investigates the learners' preferences and concerning modernized assessment tools. Finally, the researcher studies the teachers' perspectives concerning the gap between a CALL-based teaching technique and the current assessment practices and their suggestions. Then, the researcher compares the learners and teachers' perceptions and recommendations to find out the most reliable and judicious assessment technique, which is adequate to CALL-based teaching methods.

IV Findings

A. The Mismatch between a CALL-based Teaching and the Current Assessment Practices

After studying both learners and teachers' remarks and comments, it appears that the majority of the findings indicate that the current assessment practices do not conform with a CALL-based teaching technique. The results demonstrate that there is an immediate need to revise and rethink the assessment technique in the educational system in order to correlate them with the new teaching fashion. Learners feel that they belong to two different learning settings when it comes to instruction and assessment, as they grasp instruction in a modernized way assisted by the use of computer and technologies and when it comes to assessment they come back to answer a list of questions through pen and paper.

B. Learners' Perceptions

The learners' questionnaires' results indicate that 9 out of 15 students disapprove the current assessment practices in a CALL-

based teaching. They report that the current assessment practices appear to be old-fashioned in a modernized teaching environment characterized by CALL-based methods. However, 4 out of the remaining students totally agree with the current assessment practices, they like the idea of being taught in a modernized way and assessed in a basic way. The 2 last students report that they would not disapprove any assessment method that would require them to memorize since they prefer to memorize their lessons by heart and dislike any unusual questioning.

C. Teachers' Results

The teachers' interviews reveal that 8 out of 10 teachers deplore the current assessment practices. They report that it is high time to rethink their assessment techniques. Teachers claim that they prefer to embrace the innovations in education at both the instruction level and assessment level. They add they feel bored with their current assessment practices and tend to notice it reflected in their learners' attitudes when being assessed. However, the two remaining teachers claim that the current assessment practices constitute the best technique for grading and ranking their students.

D. Learners and Teachers' Suggestions

The results indicate that most teachers and learners ask for the integration of web-based assessment programs. According to Kulm (1994, p. 4), claims that web-based assessment programs are more likely to conform to the standards of authentic assessment . Galbraith and Haines (1998), report that computer-based assessment programs enhance learners' interaction and engagement, stimulate interaction, and boost their self-esteem level. However, the teachers also recommend the use of peer and self-assessment in order to raise the learners' awareness over their learning process, their achievements, lacks, and goals. McKay (2006), claims that "Some of the benefits that self- and peer-assessment bring are the increase in language awareness, the ability to speak about the language and also

the responsibility or the sense of increased responsibility for one's learning”.

In addition, teachers encourage the use of formative assessment in the future. They argue that it yields better results on learners' outcomes and better impacts on their attitudes towards assessment, learning, and their self-esteem. Even the learners report that they report that they prefer formative assessment rather than summative assessment. According to Moon (2000, p. 152), formative assessment represents “the sort of assessment that we do on a daily basis. It is closely related to the feedback pupils receive during lessons and indicates if they are doing good or wrong.” Moreover, the learners suggest the use of informal assessment like the use of portfolios, presentations, individual and groups projects. Weaver (2011), considers that "Informal assessments sometimes referred to as criterion referenced measures or performance based measures, should be used to inform instruction."

Conclusion

This investigation shed the light on the mismatch between CALL-based teaching programs and the current assessment practices. It studied the learners as well as teachers' perceptions and recommendations. The objective was to integrate effective assessment methods that conform to the norms of a CALL-based learning environment. The findings demonstrate that the current assessment practices do not correspond to a CALL- based teaching environment. In addition, the results indicate that neither teachers nor learners are satisfied with these current assessment practices. Both teachers and learners asked for rethinking and refreshing the assessment tools and programs and opted more especially for web-based assessment programs. More importantly, the objective of developing the assessment practices is to develop the learners' performances, self-esteem, motivation, engagement and the learning atmosphere as a whole.

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