Rethinking Writing Instruction through CALL Incorporation: EFL Teachers' Insights and Practices

إعادة التفكير في طرق تدريس الكتابة بدمج منهج التعليم بمساعدة الكمبيوتر:

رؤى وممارسات أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Abstract

This research study attempts to account for English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers reported views and practices regarding Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) integration at the level of their teaching of writing. To achieve such an aim and for the sake of answering the research question addressed within this study, a mixed research design composed of quantitative questionnaire along with a qualitative interview has been purposefully used. The sample of the current study includes eleven teachers with an experience of teaching written expression module at the Department of English, University of 8 May 1945, Guelma. Amongst them: seven participated in the questionnaire; while, four have been interviewed. Results and findings revealed that written expression teachers perceive positive attitudes towards technology integration and most of them have shown a great deal of CALL adoption in their teaching practices.

الملخص

تحاول هذه الدراسة البحثية معرفة وجهات نظر وممارسات أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وممارساتهم المتعلقة بإدماج منهج التعليم بمساعدة الكمبيوتر فيما يخص تدريسهم للكتابة. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف ومن أجل الإجابة على أسئلة البحث التي تمت معالجتها تم اللجوء إلى الاستبيان والمقابلة كأدوات بحث رئيسية. تشمل عينة الدراسة الحالية أحد عشر أستاذا لديهم خبرة في تدريس مقياس التعبير الكتابي في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة 8 ماي 1945، قالمة. من بينهم شارك سبعة في الاستبيان. بينما، تمت المقابلة مع أربعةمنهم. وفي الأخير كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن أساتذة التعبير الكتابي لديهم مواقف إيجابية اتجاه منهج إدماج التكنولوجيا الحديثة ومعظمهم أظهروا قدرا كبيرا من تبني هذا المنهج السالف الذكر على مستوى ممارساتهم التعليمية.

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Introduction

Writing is a skill of a significant importance in any second or foreign language learning. However, it is still difficult to be masteredas has been claimed "Writing is one of the most difficult skills that second-language (L2) learners are expected to acquire, requiring the mastery of a variety of linguistic, cognitive, and socio cultural competencies" Barkaoui (2007, as cited by Kissoum and Saadi (2016). At the university level, teachers witness that many students still face difficulties and challenges when dealing with such language skill. In the digital ageand in response to the new technological advancements, researchers, educators and language practitioners are always eagerly looking forward for new reforms and innovative teaching methodologies. In this respect, computer assisted writing instruction has recently emerged as a new instructional approach in the educational sphere. Therefore, this research study serves to gain more insights into teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding the effectiveness of CALL instruction in teaching and learning the writing skill.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Writing: An Overview

Researchers have always attempted to give comprehensive conceptualizations for the writing skill; therefore, different scholarly definitions have been found in the related literature. According to Emig (1977, p.123) writing is defined as "originating and creating a unique verbal construct that is graphically recorded". Thus, writing was traditionally viewed as a symbolic or graphic representation of speech. Later on, the connotation of the term 'writing' has been expanded to refer to a form used for the expression of thoughts and ideas. Accordingly, Tribble (1996, p.3) defines writing as a language skill that involves "not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way". Writing is also viewed as "an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose, and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience"Weigle (2002, as cited in Zidani&Bahloul, 2017). That is to say, it is a context-specific task intended for a special audience to achieve a certain purpose.

Most recently, definitions of writing are no longer restricted to pen-and-paper writing but they also include screen-based writing mode. Hyland's (2003) definition can serve as an illustration by viewing writing as "marks on page or screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules" (p.3). As far as assessment in writing is concerned, Davison and Dowson (1998, p.140-144) have pointed out to the fact that it can be accomplished from three different sources: teacher assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment. It is also worthy to be claimed that for a written task to be performed in an effective and efficient way, some components have to be taken into account namely: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (Nurgiyantoro, 2001).

1.2. Computer Assisted Language Learning

Levy (1997) has defined CALL as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (p. 1). On the other hand, Beatty (2003) has gone further in considering CALL as "any process in which a learner uses a computer and as a result, improves his or her language" (p. 7). Moreover, Egbert (2005) has expanded the definition to "learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies" (p. 4).

In brief, it can be claimed that CALL is a recently emerged form of a technology-enhanced learning environment, tool, or material. Its core notion is to support and facilitate the teaching-learning process.

1.3. CALL and Writing Instruction

New technologies serve as innovative means that can aid in second language teaching holistically and in the writing field particularly (Warschauer, 2010). A considerable number of research endeavors has asserted that CALL has positively impacted the writing skill at the level of many scales: first and foremost, it assists learners in developing the quality of their writing by detecting their mistakes at the different aspects of the language including spelling, vocabulary, or grammar (Sullivan & Pratt, 1996). Therefore, language accuracy and correctness in writing is more likely to be approached (Pennington, 2004). Moreover, it can be claimed that CALL raises the students' attention and awareness towards their mistakes and flaws and in the majority of cases provides learners with a list of adequate alternatives (Brooks & Grundy, 2000). Furthermore, CALL supplies students with extra opportunities to promote writing by offering more interactive environments where students can check, review and provide feedback for each other's written compositions (Levy, 2009).

2. Research Foundation
2.1. Objective of the Study

The aim of the present research study isto probe into teachers' perceived attitudes regarding the effectiveness of incorporating CALL into their teaching practices in general and writing instruction in particular. Besides, to enlighten the teaching/ learning process through its insightful results and findings.

2.2. Research Question

The present study attempts to answer the following research question:

What are EFL teachers reported views and regular practices regarding CALL incorporation in the writing instruction?

2.3. Research Methodology

Among the population of approximately eighteen written expression teachers at the Department of English at Guelma University, eleven have been selected to compose the sample of the current study.

The use of mixed research design, i.e. teachers' questionnaire and teachers' interview, has been adopted in this study. The rationale behind using such research methodology is to gain more comprehensive understanding of the research results.

The questionnaire is of an overall number of seven question items. In the first question (Q1), teachers are inquired to specify their appreciation of their students' level of writing. Q2 is directed towards teachers' views to identify the most problematic aspect that their students would perceive among content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Besides, Q3 requests teachers to state the writing approach that they follow in their teaching of the writing skill. Then, Q4 aims at specifying which source of feedback that teachers mostly use in the assessment of their students writing. Whereas, Q5 asks the target sample whether they use of a computer as a supportive tool in their teaching of the written expression module. What follows is Q6 that invites them to specify whether they use it in the planning, presentation, or assessment of the written expression lesson. The succeeding question (Q7) argues about which learning model that teachers frequently use with their students among: online, blended, distance learning course or the traditional learning paradigm.

By considering the second research tool i.e. the interview. Its first question targets to explore the interviewed teachers preferences regarding the traditional or the technology-based teaching paradigms. Question two ultimate goal is to synthesize teachers' held attitudes and perceptions concerning CALL use in their teaching and particularly written expression sessions. Question three within the interview serves to figure out a general picture on how CALL fits within teachers' regular teaching practices; also, to find out how, where, and how much CALL is constantly placed within their teaching framework. By the end, the last question sheds light on more suggestions and prospects for integrating technology in the teaching/learning process.

2.3. Findings and Discussions

Results and findings of both the teachers' questionnaire and interview are discussed and interpreted in an attempt to cover the objectives of the topic under investigation and to answer its research question.

Q1. How do you evalute your students' level in writing?

Table (1): Teachers' Perceptions of Their Students Level in Writing

Options	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Poor	2	28.5%
Average	5	71.4%
Advanced	00	00%
Total	7	100%

Concerning the language teachers' perceptual evaluation of their students' writing, the vast majority (71.4%) have commented for their level as being 'average'. Besides, the advanced level has not been opted by any of the teachers. While, 28.5% of them have asserted that the writing proficiency of their students can be described as being 'poor'. This means that teachers are not totally satisfied with their students' level in writing because of their awareness that they still encounter weaknesses and difficulties while writing. Therefore, these results reveal that the writing proficiency still needs work.

Q2. In which aspect of writing do your students face problems?

Table (2): Teachers' Views about Students' Main Writing Problems

Options	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Content	2	28.5%
Organization	1	14.2%
Grammar	3	42.8%
Vocabulary	2	28.5%
Mechanics	3	42.8%
All of them	3	42.8%
Total	7	100%

Question item (Q2) backs up the previous question and aims at denoting and specifying on which aspect of writing students face more problems. According

to their teachers' views, most students (42.8%)do struggle from different flaws and breakdowns at the level of all of the aforementioned writing aspects without any exception. At the first place comes grammar (42.8%) and mechanics (42.8%) being both perceived as the most problematic issues; then, followed by content and vocabulary with an equal percentage of 28.5% for both of them. What is left is Organization with the least percentage including 14.2%. These results hint to the fact that students are still in need for practice regarding the various writing elements with much more focus on grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, and content.

Q3. While teaching writing do you focus on?

Table (3): The Teachers' Used Approach in Teaching Writing

Options	Number of Teachers	Percentage
The steps of writing	1	14.2%
The final product	00	00%
Both	6	85.7%
Total	7	100%

As represented in Table 3, written expression teachers' obtained responses show that the process approach being exhibited through the first option has been selected by only one teacher (14.2%). His choice can be justified by the tendency yielding that writing is composed of a set of steps or stages. On the other hand, the remaining answers (85.7%) were in favor of the last choice. That is to say combining and altering between different writing approaches at the same time. This indicates that written teachers have become fully aware that being eclectic would sound as the best solution instead of merely sticking to one approach or another.

Q4. Which type do you mostly use for assessing your students writing?

Table (4): Written Expression Teachers' Most Used Source of Assessment

Options	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Teacher assessment	3	42.8%
Self-assessment	0	00%
Peer assessment	1	14.2%
All of them	3	42.8%
Total	7	100%

This question aims at eliciting views regarding the source of assessment that written expression teachers mostly use. Among the proposed options, 42.8% of them have reported that they mainly rely on teacher assessment in feedback provision for their students. This can signify that their classroom based instructions are oriented towards a teacher-centered role. Another 14.2% of the respondents have pointed out for 'peer assessment'. This signifies that those teachers are more oriented towards collaborative activities and tasks. Along with 42.8% who have not shown any preference for one source of assessment over another but rather they consider all of them (teacher assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment) as being equally important. This reveals that, for them, the various forms of assessment are all significant and they all complement and complete each other.

Q5. Have you ever used the computer as a supportive tool in your teaching of writing?

Table (5): The Computer as a Supportive Tool in Teaching Writing

Options	Number of Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	07	100%
b) No	00	00%
Total	07	100%

All the sample teachers (100%) under study have chosen to answer this question (Q5) by saying 'yes', they all confirm that they do use CALL to support their teaching of the writing skill. As expected, the 'no' option has been totally

avoided. This corresponding evidence once more reaffirms teachers' interest and enthusiasm in CALL optimal use to serve academic and professional goals.

Q6. If yes, have you used it for?

Table (6): Computer Use for Preparation, Presentation, or Assessment

Options	Number of Participants	Percentage
a) Preparation	07	100%
b) Presentation	02	28.5%
c) Assessment	01	14.2%
Total	07	100%

When asked to specify for which education purposes the written expression teachers use CALL, the oveall participants (100%) have stated that they consider it as a pedagogical resource that can frequently aid in the planing and preparation of the written expression course. Besides, two teachers (28.5%) rely on it in the presentation of the written expression course; while, only one other teacher (14.2%) makes use of it for writing assessment purposes. Again, The reported results denote to the fact that CALL professional and educational uses can be ranked as: (1) preparation, followed by (2) presentation, and finally comes (3) the assessment of the written expression course.

Q7. Which learning model do you frequently use with your students?

Table 7: Teachers' Choice among Diverse Teaching Models

Options	Number of Participants	Percentage
a) Online Writing Course	00	00%
b) Blended Writing Course	01	14.2%
c) Distance Writing Course	00	00%
d) Traditional Writing Course	06	85.7%
Total	07	100%

Concerning teachers' choice among a diversity of teaching-learning models, a significant percentage of teachers (85.7%) have opted for the use of traditional

teaching course. Whereas, 'online writing course' and 'distance writing course' have not been chosen by any of the respondent teachers. The only exception is for 'blended writing course' which has been put into practice by only one (14.2%) teacher. This implies teachers' reliance on traditional teaching-learning approaches; while, the modern teaching methodologies have been started to be adopted by some of them.

The following section is devoted to the presentation of the gathered data by means of teachers' interview; then, the obtained results are discussed, analyzed, and interpreted.

Question One: What do you prefer the traditional way or the technology based one in teaching Written Expression module? Explain why?

- *"I prefer the technology-based way of teaching this module. In fact I am already working on this subject of using technology. For example in the first semester I had workshops with my students in which we saw how to find out relevant and reliable sources on internet. We saw also how to skim and scan when collecting notes for the literature review"* (Teacher A)
- *"For me and after years of experience with both types, no type is privileged than the other"* (Teacher C)
- *"I do not really have a preference concerning these two ways of teaching because I believe both of them are indispensible"* (Teacher D)
- *"I prefer the traditional way in my teaching most of the time. Simply because of two reasons; 1/ it is not an easy task to use technology in our classrooms (I refer here to the required means and devices) and 2/ personally speaking I cannot trust the students with the use of some technological devices (especially the personal ones like phones)."* (Teacher B)

The responses depict that 'teacher A' has privileged the technology-based model. Besides, 'teacher C' and 'teacher D' have claimed that both teaching paradigms should be intertwined as both of them are indispensible. Nevertheless, the only interviewee who has been in favor of the traditional teaching way is 'teacher B'. For her, tech-tools might turn to be used for nonacademic purposes, and sometimes become a source of students' disturbance and distraction. To sum up, most participants support adopting technology-based model in teaching writing.

Question Two: How is your perception towards the implementation of computer technology in teaching EFL writing? Positive? Negative? Justify?

- *"Computers help learners correct spelling mistakes and check the meaning of words easily they help us teachers with the bad hand writing too. These are simple examples of the benefits."* (Teacher A)

- *"Implementing ICT in teaching the writing skill is very beneficial since it helps both learners and teachers. It helps teachers in saving time and giving feedback to each individual learner (achieving personalized or individualized instruction). Developing learner's learning styles and intelligences (e.g. visual auditory etc.)."* (Teacher C)
- *"It is mostly positive because of all the reasons l mention in the first question. But, using technology may save time in the classroom but not my (the teacher's) time of preparation, like in order to prepare using the traditional method may take me for example an hour but if I include technology, l will need 3 hours."* (Teacher D)
- *"The use of technology empowers the teaching process but I think it is positive only when the teacher is capable of implementing computer technology in teaching if the teacher cannot do so for one reason or another, I think it is going to be negative."* (Teacher B)

Among the responses; 'teacher A' and 'Teacher C' have obviously advocated the new technologies because of the multitude of positive aspects that they have stated in their aforementioned claims. Likewise, 'teacher D' has showed her positive perceptions but to a relative extent because she added that much time and more effort is needed when speaking about teachers' preparation outside the classroom. When shifting the interview to 'teacher B' perspective, she has declared for teachers as significantly being chief agents for the success of any radical change in the educational realm. Thus, results imply that all subjects tend to held positive attitudes towards integrating CALL in the EFL context.

Question Three: Do you depend on the use of computer based materials in your teaching of EFL writing? If yes, specify outside or inside classroom and explain how?

- *"I ask my students to bring their computers to the classroom. Then, they finish their tasks at home and send them via e-mail."* (Teacher A)
- *"I do so outside classroom to prepare my lessons and to communicate with my students. I read electronic sources and use them to prepare handouts and other teaching materials. I have also created a Facebook group in which I answer my students' questions and share with them additional materials related to what we discussed in classroom."* (Teacher B)
- *"Yes I depend on them inside and outside the classroom I recommend the use of electronic books and dictionary. Students write using word processor and Google docs, pdf whether in computer or mobile applications. Lessons and written materials are sometimes presented in power point or sent via email as non-print materials"* (Teacher C)
- *"I depend on it more at home simply because internet is available and the computer too! I depend on it to look for an information in this case in a way faster than looking for it in books (but this does not mean that l*

do not check books)! But we got eBooks which are replacing in a way the hard copies of books. It depends on the nature of the module. I make my students watch a video, or listen to a recording, sometimes read from slides via the data show" (Teacher D)

'Teacher A' has reported that she initiates the classroom activity inside the classroom then leaves the practice to outside the educational setting. This reveals that a blended learning approach has been adopted. When speaking about 'teacher B' and 'teacher C', they have definitely clarified that they utilize the computer technology in relation to two significant notions: (1) as a main teaching tool (preparing lessons, contacting students); (2) as a pedagogical digital resource (electronic books, electronic dictionaries, word processors). While, shedding light on 'teacher D' responses, she has acknowledged that the constant use of digital materials fundamentally depends on the nature of the module being taught. Thus, the interviewee teachers' claims illustrate that they have started to take initiatives in incorporating CALL based tasks and activities in writing instruction.

Question Four: What suggestions or recommendations do you suggest to technology implementation in teaching/learning process?

- *"Providing well equipped language laboratories to facilitate this job on both teachers and learners"* (Teacher A).
- *"The availability of all means. The teacher needs access to internet, technological devices... in order to manage the time and achieve the goal of implementing technology in teaching"* (Teacher B).
- *"Classrooms should be equipped with necessary tools and conditions…media and materials Internet access"* (Teacher C)
- *"the administration DOES provide materials to facilitate using technology"* (Teacher D)
- *"The first thing, some kind of training should be planned for teachers"* (Teacher B)
- *"Training both learners and teachers in using ICT in EFL writing"* (Teacher C)

There is a major agreement amongst all the interviewed teachers for offering well-equipped laboratories, internet access, techno devices at the level of classrooms and universities, besides; the provision of CALL-based training for both students and teachers.

3. Consolidation of Results and Findings

The results stemming from both the questionnaire and the interview are all integrated in order to answer the research question. The consolidation of the overall findings shows that:

- Teachers perceive positive attitudes, high interest, and great appreciation towards technology integration.
- Teachers have significantly opted for various technological applications both as a teaching tool and a resource.
- They have shown significant dependence for blending between both the printed (non-electronic) and digital material (electronic) at the level of various contexts i.e. inside and outside the classroom. However, they have remarkably done outside classroom more than inside the classroom.
- To sum up, the two methods obtained data and teachers' answers reveal that they have shown positive perceptions, besides; a great deal of preparedness for CALL adoption in their teaching practices.

Conclusion

On the basis on the current study results and findings, it is recommended to devote more research endavors, to maximize initiativesand explorations, andto find out alternative innovative ways forincorporating CALL as a new trend in teaching and as an innovative supplementary pedagogical tool.Besides and in order to ensure an ongoing digital professional development, EFL teachers have to keep in pace with the pedagogical challenges occurring in emergent situations as the COVID-19 pandemic period where the transformation of teaching into digital based models has become a necessity at the higher education level.

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Appendix 1: Teachers' Questionnaire

1. How do you evelute your students'level in writing?

a) Poor ☐   b) Average ☐   c) Advanced ☐

2. In which aspect of writing do your students face problems?

a) Content ☐

b) Organization ☐

c) Grammar ☐

d) Vocabulary ☐

e) Mechanics (capitalizations, punctuations, and spelling) ☐

3. While teaching writing do you focus on?

a) The steps of writing ☐   b) the final product ☐

c) Both ☐

4. Which type do you mostly use for assessing your students writing?

a) Teacher assessment ☐   b) self-assessment ☐

c) Peer assessmentd) All of them ☐

5. Have you ever used the computer as a supportive tool in your teaching of writing?

a) Yes ☐   b) No ☐

6. If yes, have you used it for?

a) Preparing the written expression lesson ☐

b) Presenting the written expression lesson ☐

c) Assessing what students learnt from the written expression lesson ☐

7. Which learning model do you frequently use with your students?

a) Online writing course ☐ b) Blended writing course ☐

c) Distance writing course d) ☐ Traditional writing course ☐

Appendix 2: Teachers' Interview

Question One: What do you prefer the traditional way or the technology based one in teaching Written Expression module? Explain why?

Question Two: How is your perception towards the implementation of computer technology in teaching EFL writing? Positive? Negative? Justify?

Question Three: Do you depend on the use of computer-based materials in your teaching of EFL writing? If yes, specify outside or inside classroom and explain how?

Question Four: What suggestions or recommendations do you suggest to technology implementation in teaching/learning process?