

The feasibility of normalizing CALL in teaching; analysing teacher's and administrator's attitudes

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INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses the attitudes of administrators and teachers towards the normalization of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in their context. It is divided into six paragraphs to synthesize theoretical orientations, research methodology, context and participants in line with previous related studies. In order to contrast the interviewees' attitudes, they were enquired with questions related to CALL.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

According to Bax (2003 p.12) one condition to integrate CALL successfully into language learning will be that it ceases to exist as a different notion for discussion. The use of CALL needs to be carefully handled and must be strongly integrated into the teaching so that learners take advantage of its use (Ayres, 2002, p.9). In addition, Felix (2004 p. 238) argues that students feel more motivated and enjoy learn-

ing; and it has been confirmed that its implementation in existing syllabuses has very good acceptance amongst learners (Ayres, 2002, p.247). More conclusive studies have indicated that technology significantly enhances learner's outcomes (Becker, 1994; Christmann & Badgett, 1999; etc. as cited in Felix, 2005). However, other studies have suggested that important challenges are still to be faced regarding for instance, the need of training for teachers, learners and even administrators (Felix 2004 p.238; Kessler 2007, p.2). Successful CALL normalization requires that teachers deal with technical failures, and lack of skills (Chambers & Bax, 2006, p.476).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on Coleman's (2005, p. 18) argument, Computer Assisted Language Learning explores communication technologies in language learning and teaching. Bearing in mind these two important words (teaching and learning), it is reasonable the relevance of analyzing the participation of teachers,

students and the administration of the institution toward the normalization of CALL. As previously stated by Chambers and Bax (2006) teachers' and managers' knowledge with computer is needed to successful normalization, since this will be part of their daily practice. For these reasons the opinion of the teacher and the administrator toward CALL is fundamental to assess their confidence about its use. To accomplish this analysis it is necessary to provide a research question to conduct the intention of our work.

The following research question proposed is in line with the collected data and the analysis from the interviews: What factors are relevant in academic and institutional perspectives when considering normalization of CALL in the language syllabuses?

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This research was carried out at the "División Académica de Educación y Artes" (DAEA) at the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco.

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The purpose of its language program is to contribute to the professional training in order to fulfil a high competence level, and innovative vision in the area of languages. Therefore, to accomplish this research the intervention of a fellow teacher and a school administrator was required, due to the importance of both participants' perspective towards CALL. It is relevant to point out that this administrator was chosen particularly because of the value of her role on taking decisions about teacher trainings and teacher classes. As for her technology background, she makes it clear that the demands and needs of technology in teaching are a must. The teacher claims that he has taken several training courses on teaching technology. Based on the interviewees' answers, their CALL backgrounds seem to be quite extent in terms of technology development.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

An interview protocol was designed along with a set of questions to interview the teacher and the administrator. The questions focused on six general aspects, considering that the two last questions should have never been covered by any previous study. The aspects to be covered were *Teacher's training* (Chamber & Bax 2006 p.473), *Teacher's and learner's motivation* (Ayres, 2002 p.9), *Learner's and teacher's attitude* (Kessler 2007, p.2), *Effectiveness of CALL* (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999, pp. 3-4), Use of updated technology in CALL in our teaching context, Implementation of CALL in the syllabuses of the language degree. The aim was to find out the teacher's and the administrator's attitudes towards the normalization of CALL in our teaching context and to contrast these attitudes. Firstly, the data was obtained through an individual interview to the teacher

and the administrator which was then analyzed. The questions were also individually analyzed by synthesizing the relevant issues following the aspect concerned. Secondly, a thorough comparison was carried out between both interviewees' attitudes pointing at their convergences and differences. Interesting issues were obtained from the latter.

RESULTS

The results indicate that the four general aspects covered in previous studies (Chamber & Bax 2006 p.473), (Ayres, 2002 p.9), (Kessler 2007, p.2), (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999, pp. 3-4) are in line with our findings. First, the teacher and the administrator agree on the importance of teacher training in CALL following Chambers' and Bax's claims (2006, p.473). Second, both perspectives about technology agree on its valuable effect toward motivation. As Felix (2005) states, those outcomes affect the classroom climate in terms of satisfaction and comfort. Third, the fact that learner's attitude is positive regarding computer assisted subjects is concordant in both views, which is backed by Ayres' claim (2002, p.247). And fourth, studies (Becker, 1994; Christmann & Badgett, 1999; Hativa, 1994; Kozma, 1991; Kulik & Kulik, 1987; Liao, 1992; Niemiec & Walberg, 1987, 1992; Ryan, 1991; Van Dusen & Worthren, 1994 as cited in Felix, 2005 p.3) about computer and academic achievement also show agreement with the interviewees' view since they also indicate that technology use can improve learner general outcomes.

DISCUSSION

On the one hand, it can be said that the teacher's and the administrator's perspectives are at times congruent with their opinions about teaching. In line with Underwood and Warschauer (as cited in Bax, 2003) both

interviewees paid attention to the importance of CALL that provides students with authentic materials and tools to fulfill the communicative purposes required in the real world. On the other hand, our findings reveal that, opinions converge in that updated technology plays an important role in learning quality, in the feasibility of implementing technology in our syllabuses. As Ayres (2002) suggests, CALL is considered as a learning tool in the classroom and needs to be directly related within the curriculum. However discordance is found regarding financial issues to updating technology and CALL possible impact on teaching. Moreover, aspects concerning CALL disadvantages, such as the lack of teacher attendance to offered training courses seemingly due to their fear to technology are also highlighted.

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Vuelos inconclusos I.