

A Mixed Method Approach Investigating EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices towards Classroom-Based Assessment in Saudi Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract : While research into language assessment has expanded in recent years, few if any studies to date have targeted the nature of thought processes used by teachers when constructing classroom-based assessment. This study reports on teachers' conceptions of English grammar assessment and their classroom assessment practices in their Saudi higher educational facilities. A mixed-method approach using both qualitative and quantitative research instruments was employed to elicit teachers' perceptions of English grammar assessment and their relationship to their current practices. Participants of the study included EFL teachers from 4 different educational facilities: King Saudi University, Princess Noura University, Imam Mouhamed Islamic University, and Institute of Public Administration. Data collection involved questionnaire (N=100), semi-structured interviews (N=30), retrospective thinking (N=20), and document analysis (N=20). Activity theory is used as an interpretive framework to explore and investigate the entire system of constructing classroom-based assessment. Preliminary findings reveal several similarities and differences between the participants' stated beliefs and their current practices of assessing English grammar. Findings also showed that teacher participant's beliefs about how English grammar should be assessed are influenced mostly by prior learning experience as well as their teaching instruction practices. Their practices, on the other hand, was more guided by educational policies and lack of teacher training in the field of assessment, among other factors. This research makes a significant contribution to knowledge in three different areas: it enriches the literature on language teacher cognition; it builds on the body of research on language classroom assessment, and it expands on the possibilities to use AC to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices.

Keywords : activity theory, classroom-based assessment, language teacher cognition, mixed method approach

Conference Title : ICEAL 2019 : International Conference on English Applied Linguistics

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : November 18-19, 2019