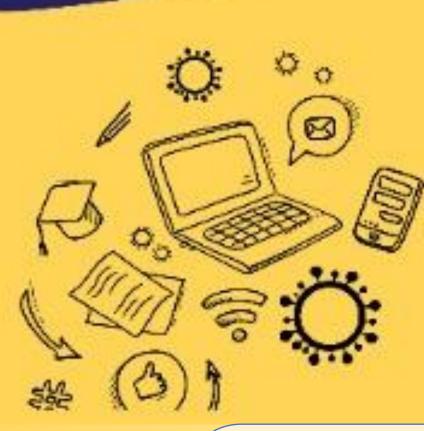Shahid Rajaee
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A Review of CALL-related Discourse Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Bulks of knowledge circulate in various academic and professional communities. Individuals are exposed to a huge amount of scientific and technical information. Hence, this pushes the scientists to cross the academic, objective boundaries of serious writing and transform their scholarly knowledge into non-scholarly and comprehensible accounts for the public. Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) is no exception. With the advent of COVID-19 and the sudden shift to online educational platforms, the public got even more eager to know about the features and potentials of virtual teaching and learning settings. Since learning a language has always been a need for people all over the world, utilization of virtual settings to develop and enhance the linguistic capabilities has gained more prominence. The current study aimed to present an overview of the existing literature on the way scientific and technical information in general and CALL in particular have been communicated in the public-friendly language by means of discursive features.

According to Gavroglu (2012) popularization is a process of transferring knowledge from a source by those who 'know' to an audience comprised of those who 'do not know'. He states that popularization has been freed from consideration as a well-defined, concrete, and constrained form of scientific genre, a feature of which is now thought to be a permanent presence in almost all forms of scientific activity. He argues that popularization is a process by which complicated things are made easy.

But Gavroglu (2012) rightly mentions that instead of focusing on the cognitive aspects of what is being communicated and the details of the language in which complex scientific knowledge is communicated, many historians of science focus on how society in general and various social groups get in touch with science. And when we refer to science, we don't mean just the content of science, but the whole culture of science, the whole idea of what it means to be scientific.

Furthermore, Hyland (2004) believed metadiscourse is recognized as an important means of facilitating communication, upholding author positions, and building relationships with audiences. Its importance lies in the role it plays in explaining the context of interpretation and proposing how communicative acts define and sustain social groups.

No study has attempted to investigate the metadiscourse resources in CALL articles in a comparative study between popularized and non-popularized sciences. Hence, a comparative study of the way the popularized science and non-popularized science CALL articles authors pose their views through metadiscourse resources seems worthy of attention. The study attempts to investigate the frequency of metadiscourse resources in CALL articles and compare the CALL articles in popularized and non-popularized sciences to see how they share their views for non-scientists and make science accessible to lay audiences so that they would be able to grasp the basic concepts and have an idea of what science is essentially.

METHOD

The relevant articles within the past twenty years were downloaded and reviewed. The articles with such keywords as popularization, popular texts, CALL, metadiscourse, discourse markers were reviewed.

The design chosen for this study is one of the mixed methods designs, called conversion design, which involve 'transformation of data' (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 563). According to Ali et al. (2010), In Transformation Design, "Qualitative data can be quantified by counting the number of times a particular topic is identified" (p. 564). Research involves transformation design, when researchers start with qualitative data and analysis, converting words to numbers to perform statistical and comparative analyses.

The corpus of the current study would comprise 100 CALL articles. The sample would incorporate 50 CALL articles in popularized sciences and 50 CALL articles in non-popularized sciences.

RESULTS

The results indicated that despite its importance, CALL has not received the desired attention and has not yet been viewed in terms of the possible discursive practices which may lead to better understanding of the advancements in this area by the public. Scant attention has been paid to the way discourse features would contribute to the dissemination of CALL-related information.

According to Gavroglu (2012) one of the most common goals of science popularization is to see it as a process of narrowing the cultural gap between the "elite" and other social groups. Thus, the implicit agenda of popularization is that the elite and the rest share the same knowledge and the same values about the importance of that knowledge. (Gavroglu, 2012)

Using metadiscourse resources help readers process written text better. Thus, logical connectives (however, therefore, etc.), sequencing items (first, next, then, etc.), and hedges (might,perhaps, possibly, etc.) are, widely used in academic texts as well as in articles related to CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning).

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DISCUSSION

The study revealed the existing gap in the literature on the way CALL findings can be linguistically programed and become accessible to the public in order to enhance their CALL-oriented literacy and enable them to employ the best possible sources for learning a language through technological tools.

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