Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium

Book Review

CALL for Bridges between School and Academia

Edited by Anna Turula and Maria Chojnacka

Reviewed by

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This edited collection of research articles aims to demonstrate how research and pedagogy can be integrated in the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Realizing that some research studies could be conducted for their own sake rather than to support practice, the editors of this book combined ten research studies that attempt to connect school and academia. These ten research studies, written by scholars in Poland, encompass a wide range of topics in language studies and provide results and discussions that have practical implications in school settings, including secondary schools, universities, and teacher training institutions. More specifically, they provide readers with ideas and practical examples of how research could support practice in the area of CALL.

In Chapter 1, Malgorzata Kurek and Anna Skowron present the findings from a pilot survey that examined the attitudes and beliefs of Polish teachers towards open practices, the sharing and reusing of (online) materials

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developed by others. The results show that approximately 90% of the participants hold a positive attitude to borrowing or sharing teaching materials, especially in the form of textual material. The researchers suggest practical issues that need to be addressed in teacher professional development, such as exposure to and adaptation of multimedia content.

The following two chapters show how university and academia can be connected through research apprising effective educational practices. In Chapter 2, Katarzyna Hryniuk conducts a corpus-based study and analyzes 20 research articles by Polish writers and 20 articles by native speakers of English, in order to explore the differences in the use of metalinguistic cues between the two groups. The result shows two different cultural groups have more similarities than differences in using metalinguistic cues. While the result itself does not directly support educational practices, the research method used can be applied for effective educational practices. For example, Hryniuk suggests that academic writing courses can directly apply Data-Driven Learning (DDL) so that students and novice scholars can improve their writing skills by being aware of linguistic patterns and/or form. In Chapter 3, Elizbieta Gajewska and Joanna Podhorodecka demonstrate the changes encountered in business letters in recent years due to the development of digital technology. The authors describe how business written communication (e.g., letters) has changed to various formats from its traditional form which used to be highly conventionalized and thus could be repetitive. They then introduce teaching tools such as *Souffleur* which can help both professional business writers and second language learners acquire strategies of text production.

The next two chapters focus on bridging theory and practice in the area of language teacher training. In Chapter 4, Jaroslaw Krajka emphasizes the importance of the notions of English as an International Language, English as a Lingua Franca, and World Englishes in foreign language teacher training curricula and states that it could be possible to have successful training processes by incorporating selected computer-based activities into the curriculum. Krajka shows how students can benefit from DDL and Internet-based Language Teaching. Krajka suggests using these two selected CALL branches to support student teachers in acquiring culture-sensitive language pedagogy, and help them better prepare for teaching multicultural and multilingual classes. In Chapter 5, Anna Turula postulates digital teacher training needs to include new technologies in the framework of theory–practice–reflection rather than simply incorporating the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) component into the syllabus. She introduces *Digital Teacher of English* (DTE), an MA teacher training program specialized in various digital literacies, launched at the Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland. After analyzing 149 responses on DTE, she explains the importance of balancing

technical knowledge, pedagogical/interpersonal skills, and personal qualities (e.g., responsibility, flexibility) in CALL teacher training.

The next four chapters provide various state-of-the-art CALL course designs. In Chapter 6, Wojciech Malec demonstrates the development and evaluation of an online crash course in elementary Irish, which was delivered on an online platform called WebClass. In Chapter 7, Mariusz Kruk investigates the effects of using the virtual world Active World on students' willingness to communicate in English and finds positive effects on students' use of target language in the Active World environment. Krzysztof Kotula's study, reported in Chapter 8, examines technology-enhanced delayed corrective feedback in learning French. The results were that the participants consider video recordings and video annotations (e.g., YouTube) effective, and that they believe delayed corrective feedback can be more useful than synchronous teacher feedback. In Chapter 9, Mariusz Marczak discusses findings from a case study conducted at a teacher training institution and describes ways of using computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as Skype, to maintain students' classroom presence.

In the final chapter, Ewa Zarzycka-Piskorz examines the advantages and disadvantages of using the Moodle e-learning platform and describes how teachers design blended learning courses in an attempt to narrow the gap between traditional teaching and tertiary education requirements. The researcher suggests that secondary school and tertiary education need to try building bridges from both sides, and emphasizes the importance of incorporating teachers' professional knowledge in e-learning courses. In doing so, the author emphasizes five areas for improvement: (1) language complexity, (2) language usefulness, (3) variety of materials, (4) variety of tasks, and (5) evaluation system.

Although not specified by the editors, this edited volume offers a valuable resource for researchers, teacher training curriculum developers, teacher trainers, teachers, and graduate students in the field of Language Studies (Second/Foreign Language) and/or CALL. The ten chapters provide interesting research topics such as how to implement computer-based activities in class, practical course content for professional development curricula, and various teaching software tools. As Broekkamp and Van Hout-Wolters (2007) identified, two problems that show the gap between educational research and practice are that educational research is limited in practical use, and that practitioners rarely make use of educational research. This book puts much effort into showing how research results could be efficiently adapted by practitioners.

There are a couple of parts where this book could have been strengthened in its organization. First, some studies failed to include where the institution or school was located. As the research studies introduced in the book

are all written solely by scholars in Poland, it can be assumed all schools in the research were in Poland. However, more detailed explanation could be helpful for readers. Second, including research from various countries would have provided readers with broader perspectives and the book's appeal could be enhanced. The book did not state that it aimed to introduce research from Poland only. Rather, what the editors included in the introduction implies that this book is a collection of research studies focusing on bridging school and academia universally.

As stated in the introduction of the book, while school and academia should be in constant communication and collaboration, this does not necessarily happen in reality – research is done without much consideration of the effectiveness of its outcomes, and schools are skeptical of the collaboration with academia. The editors emphasize the importance of narrowing the gap between academia and schools in secondary levels and above. *CALL for Bridges between School and Academia* makes a great contribution to the field of Language Studies/CALL as the research studies presented in this volume show the possibilities of connecting research and practice for quality teaching.

About the Reviewer

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References

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