It Takes a Village to Publish and Review

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EDITORIAL

In 2012, we gave our first editorial the title “The CALICO Journal in 2012.” Over the past two and a half years, we have interacted with a large group of people: authors, reviewers, copy-editors, editorial assistants, layouters, subscription manager, technical support at Public Knowledge Project who provide the services of the Open Journal System, student volunteers, members of CJ’s editorial board and CALICO’s executive board, and editors of other journals in CALL and in Applied Linguistics and dealt with and benefited from enquiries from indexing and abstracting companies, publishers, and research service providers. We have worked with Izabela Uscinski (editorial assistant), Elinor Dirette (copy editor), Osman Solmaz (social media coordinator), Dan Nickolai (CJ audio coordinator), and the former members of the editorial board—Ruth Sanders, Nina Garrett, and Mary-Ann Lyman Hager—and with Claire Bradin-Siskin, Jack Burston, Marie-Noëlle Lamy, and Noriko Nagata—all board members whose service term comes to an end at this year’s CALICO conference. We are very grateful for their many and various contributions.

Of course, the quality (and quantity) of manuscripts our authors submit is CJ’s backbone. We publish roughly six research articles per regular issue and have received well over 100 unsolicited manuscripts during our tenure as editors. If you add to this number the articles submitted for special issues, invited review articles, and book and software reviews, the sheer volume is substantial. It is therefore our large group of reviewers who impact the quality of the articles you are reading and the timeliness of the published issues the most. More than 300 reviewers are currently volunteering their time, energy, and expertise for CJ. They represent the breadth of research in CALL in all its subfields as well as the geographic and linguistic distribution of CJ’s readers and authors. A submitted manuscript is sent out to at least three external reviewers, after passing the in-house review, which is normally conducted by three reviewers. Even the many promising manuscripts, which have received enthusiastic reviews in the first round go through a second round of peer review. So each of the articles in this issue of the CALICO Journal will have been read by six to nine different reviewers, the editors, the editorial assistant, and the layouter before it reaches you—the reader.

Each external reviewer fills out CJ’s review form by answering a few multiple choice questions that help us gain an impression of the overall perceived quality of the submission and s/he provides us with a recommendation: Accept submission, Revisions required, Resubmit for review, Resubmit elsewhere, or Decline submission. Most importantly, each reviewer also provides the author(s) with general comments and detailed suggestions for recommended changes and can send confidential comments to the editors. To maintain and improve the quality of the research published in CJ, we rely on a double-blind peer review: the identity of the author(s) will not be revealed to the reviewers and vice versa. Therefore reviewers are asked to refrain from identifying themselves in the comments and suggestions to the author(s). This is also why we require authors to refer to themselves as “Author” in the manuscript. Each blind review serves two functions that are equally important. (1) Based on the reviewer’s expertise as a researcher, the review provides an evaluation of the manuscript, which will inform the editors’ decision about the publication or rejection of the
manuscript. (2) The review provides constructive feedback to the author(s) that will help them to improve relevant aspects of their paper. The author(s) receive the external reviewers’ comments and recommendations for changes, and so do the other reviewers of the same manuscript. This way, we ensure that reviewers can compare evaluation perspectives and the level of detail and comprehensiveness of the three reviews. Reviewers are also ‘rated’ by the editors in terms of the timeliness and overall quality of their review, which helps us determine how much ‘weight’ to ascribe to each review.

What constitutes a good review? First and foremost, we are asking reviewers to bear in mind that each author is either a colleague or graduate student in our field. In other words, they are writing their comments to a real person who has—most likely—invested a lot of thought and effort into the manuscript. We are encouraging reviewers to be critical but constructive and probing while maintaining a respectful tone. In a good review, the reviewer briefly summarizes the main points of the manuscript, in order to ensure the author(s) their work is being taken seriously and has been understood. Authors are looking for general feedback on the central aspects of their study and manuscript—the pertinence of their research question(s), the adequacy and comprehensiveness of the literature report and the discussion of previous studies, the validity of their data collection and research method(s), and the solidity and persuasiveness of their discussion and conclusion. They appreciate and benefit from concrete constructive suggestions: a structural change in the manuscript, which will make the whole argument flow better; references to literature and studies that are relevant to their project; ways to address flaws in the data analysis and/or the discussion of results, etc. It is in the interest of each author to improve the paper as much as they can. All the reviewers’ help in this regard will be gratefully received, even if the paper is ultimately rejected.

We as editors also want to see our reviewers help the authors improve the quality of their paper, so that we can all maintain and improve the quality of the CALICO Journal and provide a useful service to the CALL research community. We also expect from the review sufficiently detailed information, which guides us in our editorial decision. We value a reasoned expert opinion on the soundness of the theoretical basis, the appropriateness of the research methods, and the solidity of the discussion and conclusion. We would like to see answers to such questions as: How original, important, and timely is the contribution of the research in this paper to the CALL field? What level of familiarity are the authors demonstrating with the relevant literature in CALL and cognate areas? How is the theory and/or method that is discussed and applied in this paper viewed by researchers in CALL and—equally important—in research areas from which theory or method were adopted? Are the theories evoked, the data gathered, and the methods employed commensurate within themselves as well as among each other. To what extent can the reader follow the argument? How transparent does the data set, methodology, and reasoning become? Are the conclusions relevant and to whom will they be relevant? What are the immediate or potential practical implications of this research, if there are any? All of this boils down to the fact that specific points in the context of the manuscript submission are most useful to both the editors and the authors.

As with many other editors of many other academic journals, we are asking a great deal of our reviewers because we know only with their expertise and their constructive support for CJ and the manuscript’s author(s) can we continue as a publishing outlet of high-quality CALL research. Interest in this research is often time-sensitive due to rapidly developing technologies and emerging research discourses and language-learning pedagogies. This and the wish of most authors to see their manuscript published in a timely fashion mean that both editors and reviewers work towards tough deadlines. During the first week after manuscript submission, the in-house review is conducted. Soon after the submission is sent out for external review and the reviewers are given five weeks to complete their review. Often additional reviewers, who are also given five weeks, have to be found later, when an offer to review is declined or the review contains insufficient information or is not forthcoming by the agreed upon deadline. In most cases, authors can expect to receive reviewer feedback and an editorial decision after two to three months. If
one adds the time needed for author revisions, possibly a second round of reviews and revisions, and editing and production of the issue, then it becomes clear why it takes about 18 months from submission to publication. We are relying on our reviewers and authors so that we are able to keep this comparatively short period of turn-around. For example, the five regular research articles for this issue were submitted between April and December 2012.

In our invited article this issue, Page Ware and Emily Hellmich provide a review of recent trends in CALL research in K-12 contexts, which tend to approach CALL from one of two major standpoints—learning outcomes and learning opportunities. In the case of the former, technology is largely viewed as a framework for enhancing established curricular goals and facilitating more efficient and effective paths to learning. The latter stance views technology as playing a major role in reconceptualizing how we think about education in general. The authors suggest that two key areas ripe for collaboration between CALL educators and researchers across these two frameworks are assessment and professional development.

The first of a set of research articles on aspects of teaching languages with technology presents a design-based research study. Denis Samburskiy and Joy Quah investigate the instructional moves employed by novice online tutors to provide corrective feedback in an online asynchronous language course. The findings suggest that teachers/tutors prioritized the meaning-centered nature of their written interaction, with recasts and textual enhancements being their primary corrective feedback techniques. Implications for more targeted forms of teacher preparation in future design cycles, which expose novice online teachers/tutors to theory and practice of providing form-focused feedback, are discussed.

The investigation of how Taiwanese pre-service teachers adopt YouTube technology to develop and upload microteaching videos is by Yu-Chih Sun. Her results show that the pre-service teachers employed a variety of styles and approaches in their YouTube lessons and gained valuable hands-on experience in CALL. A number of factors affected the delivery and quality of the microteaching lessons (e.g., sources of anxiety, shifts in motivation, a strong focus on visuals and personal appearance, lack of student feedback and interaction).

In a third article involving novice instructors, LanHui Zhang Ryder and Lisa Yamagata-Lynch use a sociocultural lens to investigate the sixteen-week cross-continental collaboration between intermediate Chinese students in the US and Chinese students in a Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language course in China. The study identified and elaborated on the tensions, underlying reasons, and pedagogical implications of the students’ cross-continental collaborative learning efforts. The authors present an activity system that can provide insight for practitioners, researchers, and administrators with an interest in cross-continental collaboration.

Also relying on sociocultural theory, Mark Anthony Darhower aims to understand the developmental processes of two university Spanish learners as they produce a series of narrations in a synchronous computer mediated environment. The analysis illuminates the zone of proximal development of the participants, characterizing not only their current level of independent functioning, but also their potential when provided with mediation, discussing the utility of synchronous computer-mediated communication for dynamic assessment.

This issue’s spotlight article focuses on the specific issues of reading Chinese characters. Jing Wang studied the reading strategies and reading comprehension retention with and without a pop-up dictionary by beginning learners of Chinese. Through her qualitative analyses of answers and think-aloud protocols, she identifies generally-used reading strategies and other strategies for obtaining character and word meanings and sentence meanings. Statistical results indicated that much of the improvement gained from using the pop-up dictionary during the first reading was not retained over a short period of time. She concludes that students need additional guidance to effectively use a pop-up dictionary.

Finally, we welcome five new members to our editorial board: Ali Farhan AbuSeileek, (Al al-Bayt University, Jordan), Piet Desmet (KU Leuven KULAK, Belgium), Irina Elgort (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), Long Van Nguyen (The University of Danang, Viet Nam), and Teadira Pérez (University of Los Andes, Venezuela). As always, we hope you will find this issue of the *CALICO Journal* a stimulating and informative read and we welcome your comments on Facebook and Twitter!