

## Review of CALL Environments: Research, Practice, and Critical Issues

CALL Environments: Research,  
Practice, and Critical Issues

Joy Egbert and Elizabeth Hanson-Smith  
(Eds.)  
1999

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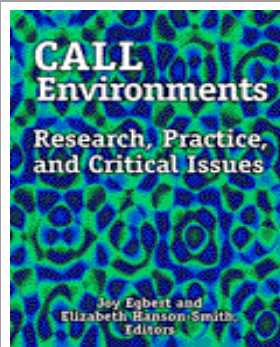
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### Reviewed by Saad AlKahtani, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

CALL Environments is a collaborative work by a group of ESL/EFL teachers and CALL researchers. The book provides a background of ESL research, practice, and other important issues as related to the use of technology in language classrooms. ESL/EFL teachers in training and teacher-trainers will find this book helpful for its themes of SLA research and practical suggestions for the use of technology in classroom environments. Software developers and teachers who choose software for courses, programs, or departments will also appreciate the advice offered by the authors. In addition, CALL researchers will benefit from the ideas and questions for further exploration at the end of each part of the book.

The book is a collection of 28 chapters which are organized into eight parts. Each part is based on a theme in SLA research and its application supporting the use of technology in the language classrooms. Part 1, "Interaction," highlights the importance of high-quality interaction and negotiation in learning, and suggests ways to enhance interaction in computer-assisted classrooms. Part 2, "Authentic Audience," explains the notion of audience in language teaching and the authentic audience opportunities computer-mediated communication (e.g., electronic discussion lists, e-mail keypals, and the World Wide Web) offers to language learners. Part 3, "Authentic Task," emphasizes the importance of authentic second language tasks, and shows possibilities for using technology to create and use authentic activities in language teaching and learning. Criteria for software evaluation are given at the end of this part. Part 4, "Opportunities for Exposure and Production," illustrates the concept of input and negotiation of meaning and its application to CALL and computer-mediated communicative language teaching. A variety of on- and off-line CALL resources that ESL/EFL teachers can use to help their students' language learning is also suggested. Part 5, "Time/Feedback," discusses new ways of assessment (e.g., observation, journals, role-plays, and portfolios) and how computer-based testing might change the way language learners are assessed. Part 6, "Intentional Cognition, Learning Styles, and Motivation," reports on differences among learners and the role computers might play in helping teachers provide varied learning activities to meet their students' diverse learning styles. Part 7, Atmosphere, raises the issue of classroom atmosphere with the aim of offering students the best learning experiences using CALL. Part 8, "Control," points out the concept of autonomy in language learning and how computer language software helps to give students control over their learning experiences. Part 8 ends with elements and characteristics that language software designers may take into consideration in order to support learners' autonomy. The book

concludes with appendices on Internet resources for teachers and students, including information about professional organizations, electronic forums, interactive Web pages, freeware and shareware archives on-line, and software publishers.

## **EVALUATION**

CALL Environments is well organized. It begins with a chapter that introduces the framework for the entire book, contains eight parts, and ends with a scenario of the ESL classroom in the year 2005. With the exception of Part 2, each part opens with SLA theory and research and closes with CALL issues. The title, *CALL Environments: Research, Practice, and Critical Issues*, accurately reflects the content and the approach of the book. The layout has drawings which make it fairly interesting, and a style quite similar to that of many actual academic course books.

The book rates quite high with respect to its approach, content, and organization. A major strength of the book is its underlying pedagogical framework based on ESL and SLA research. Most other CALL books do not have specific theoretical positions, which make this text a great contribution to the field and an essential reference for ESL/EFL CALL teachers and researchers.

The book has no major shortcomings. Readers, however, may not be able to predict the themes of Part 4, "Opportunities for Exposure and Production," and Part 5, "Time/Feedback," just by looking at their titles. While the first title is given to the theme "input, interaction, and CALL," the latter is for "assessment in the language learning classroom." It is also unfortunate that the book does not include an index. This makes it difficult for readers to search for names, subjects, activities, and software.

Despite these slight shortcomings, in large part, this is a very appropriate book for ESL teachers, researchers, and students in CALL graduate programs. At the end of each part, teachers and researchers are provided with ideas and questions for further investigation. Software designers and buyers will also find the criteria for software evaluation (p. 161-and p. 422) very useful.

## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

[Saad AlKahtani](#), a Ph.D. candidate at [Indiana University of Pennsylvania \(IUP\)](#), received his MA/TESOL from Michigan State University (1997). His research interests include computer-assisted language learning and teaching methodologies.

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