REVIEW OF *CALL: MEDIA, DESIGN, & APPLICATIONS*

CALL: Media, Design, & Applications

Keith Cameron (Ed.)

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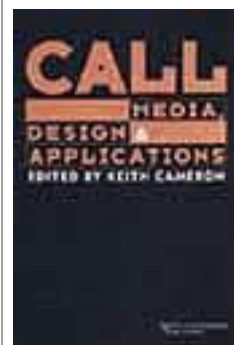US $85.00 (or 150 Dutch guilder)
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This edited volume contains three sections, Media, Design, and CALL Applications, as well as an introduction and an epilogue. Editor Keith Cameron, one of the best known experts in computer-assisted language learning in the United Kingdom, introduces the volume with a brief history of CALL that provides a context for the rest of the volume, which in turn is intended to "provide a focus for future research, be a stimulus to graduates embarking on Master's or Doctoral programs, encourage reflection amongst established CALLers, increase awareness of what has been done and what still has to be done in the CALL domain, and establish a reference work which is unavoidably incomplete but will constitute a source of essential information for all those involved in CALL" (p. 2). In this introduction, Cameron emphasizes that *CALL: Media, Design, & Applications* deals with language *learning* rather than language *teaching.*

Like two other recent collections reviewed in LLT, *New Ways of Learning and Teaching: Focus on Technology and Foreign Language Education* (Bradley & Lomicka, 2000), and *Technology-Enhanced Language Learning* (O'Leary, 1998), this volume includes articles by a variety of well-known CALL practitioners and researchers. In contrast with those volumes, however, *CALL: Media, Design, & Applications* is extremely international; the authors included hail from three continents, with Europe and Canada best represented. Like the other two volumes, this collection is also very diverse in terms of the authors' background, interests, level of discourse, and experience in CALL. This diversity of educational situations and cultures, while it makes for some unevenness, is a breath of fresh air and allows for perspectives not possible in the other volumes.

In general, *CALL: Media, Design, & Applications* meets the goals outlined by the editor. Thus, it represents a significant contribution to the field of CALL and will be an important addition to many researchers' libraries. Especially valuable are the contributors' extensive bibliographies, and their reflections on the future of the topics covered. Yet, it is also important to note that this volume, like any book dealing with technology, is not always completely up-to-date, an observation intended not to disparage this work, but rather to point out one of the most frustrating problems of working in a field which is evolving so quickly.

Section 1, Media, includes an article on computer-mediated communication by Dana Paramskas of Guelph, one on user-driven development and content-driven research by Wilfried Decoo and Jozef Colpaert of Antwerpen, and one on authoring by David Bickerton of Plymouth. Paramskas' chapter, "The Shape of Computer-Mediated Communication," is one that shows its age perhaps more than any other in the volume. Computer-mediated communication is evolving so rapidly that it is difficult to do much more than provide a general outline of what has happened to date, a task that is well-performed in this article. Two areas not covered here are commercially-available software for synchronous chat, such as Daedalus and Common Space, and courseware, such as Top Class and Blackboard, which make the use of chat so much easier, especially for combinations of both synchronous and asynchronous chat.

The second chapter, "User-Driven Development and Content-Driven Research," is my personal favorite in the whole volume. Decoo and Colpaert provide a convincing account of why their software and their work have been successful in Belgium. They argue that their success is due to providing what users actually want instead of what they, themselves, believe their users need. All too often CALLers create programs that they believe will be useful, only to discover that few users are interested. In fact, one of the main obstacles to greater CALL implementation is that teachers and students do not see an immediate need for it nor are they able to see how it relates to the existing curriculum. It is fine to say (as I do) that teachers and students need to repurpose and implement CALL creatively; however this requires more time than many CALL users are willing or able to spend. Colpaert and Decoo have understood this problem, and thus have not made the mistake of falsely assuming that users will adapt software to their own needs. Instead, the authors have tailored their work to a specific instructional situation, Belgium's national English language curriculum, and they have created an extremely useful series of programs for the targeted learners.

The third chapter in the Media section, "Authoring and the Academic Linguist: the Challenge of Multimedia CALL," is also one that reflects the difficulty of publishing up-to-date surveys. Bickerton discusses various authoring programs and their advantages and shortcomings. He clearly points out the difficulties current teachers and instructors would have using these programs to create materials, and he discusses problems such as having to learn programming languages, inadequate manuals and tools, copyright issues, and perhaps most importantly, lack of time.

In Section 2, Design, there are also three chapters: "Design Processes in CALL" by Michael Levy of Queensland; "Evaluating Performance" by Robin Goodfellow of the Open University in the UK; and "Computers as Tools for Sociocollaborative Language Learning" by Carla Meskill of the State University of New York at Albany. Levy's (1997) book, *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Context and Contextualization,* which has been reviewed in LLT (Leahy, 1998), is already regarded as a landmark volume in CALL. The chapter in the present volume is a natural outgrowth of his book's arguments and is important in its insistence on using theory in the design of CALL, as well as for its discussion of evaluation.

Goodfellow carries this argument further by pointing out that evaluation is also influenced by design, and he reports on a very interesting case study where he used students' retention of lexical items as a means to evaluate learning via different media. The third chapter focuses on how different kinds of spaces can be used to create a community of learners, such as interrogation space, workbook space, storybook space, creation space, virtual world space, and dialogic space.

Section 3, CALL Applications, is the largest in the volume and contains six chapters. Gregory Aist of Carnegie-Mellon discusses speech recognition; Henry Hamburger, Michael Schoelles, and Florence Reeder from George Mason look at artificial intelligence and CALL; Cornelia Tschichold from Basel and Gerard Kempen from Leiden discuss aspects of grammar and CALL; Glyn Holmes from Western Ontario presents corpora in language and literature; and Martha Pennington of Luton discusses affective factors in computer-assisted writing.

In "Speech Recognition in Computer-Assisted Language Learning," Aist is thorough in his presentation of the problems of speech recognition used for language learning, as is the George Mason group in their discussion of AI and natural language processing for CALL ("More Intelligent CALL"). Tschichold provides an excellent, detailed discussion of why grammar checkers are less useful for teachers and students than they might be ("Grammar Checking for CALL: Strategies for Improving Foreign Language Grammar Checkers"), and Kempen has a very interesting chapter ("Visual Grammar: Multimedia for Grammar and Spelling Instruction in Primary Education") on the benefits of presenting grammar in a visual manner.

In "Corpus CALL: Corpora in Language and Literature," Holmes offers a series of creative ways in which to use language corpora in language learning, and I plan to incorporate her ideas in my own classes. For example, she suggests using lexical lists, concordances, and even written lists to focus on specific word use, as well as on how those words relate to the larger topics of the course. I agree with Holmes that starting with single words and combinations of single words or concepts can then help illuminate larger semantic units in ways well-suited to student learning.

In the last chapter of the section ("The Missing Link in Computer-Assisted Writing"), Pennington says the time has come to focus on students, rather than computers, in the analyses of "success" in computer-assisted writing. She provides a strong argument for addressing affective aspects in computer-assisted writing as well as an illuminating discussion of these issues.

In some respects, I liked the epilogue, "Is Your CALL Connected? Dedicated Software vs. Integrated CALL," by Ian Richmond of the Université Sainte-Anne in Nova Scotia, more than any single chapter of the book. Richmond provides the reader with an excellent overview of the current state of CALL development and usage. As such, the epilogue to this volume might be a good prologue to a new volume in this field, one that treats the Web and the Internet as primary sources of CALL. It could also be used as an introductory article to anyone teaching the subject of CALL.

CALL: Media, Design, and Applications offers a variety of articles (both research-based and experience-based) which examine the state of computer-assisted language learning and signal future directions for the field. This emphasis on the future, as well as the excellent bibliographies presented in every chapter, make Cameron's volume a particularly useful addition to the field of CALL. In contrast to a work such as Muysken's (1997) *New Ways of Learning And Teaching: Focus on Technology and Foreign Language Education,* this volume is aimed at those whose primary interest is CALL theory and research, rather than those interested more in how technology affects language pedagogy and language teacher education. In this way, it is similar to Bush and Terry's (1997) *Technology-Enhanced Language Learning,* although its inclusion of international contributors and its more academic discourse also distinguish it from that volume. In addition, the more recent publication date allows it to be closer to current trends in CALL than the Bush and Terry volume. As such, *CALL: Media, Design, and Applications* is indispensable, at least for the near future, for anyone who wishes to learn in detail about the current state of CALL, its media, design, and applications.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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