

REVIEW OF *CALLING ON CALL: FROM THEORY AND RESEARCH TO NEW DIRECTIONS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING*

Calling on CALL: From Theory and Research to New Directions in Foreign Language Teaching

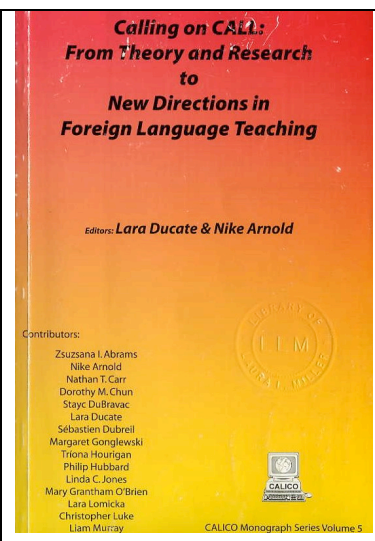
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Calling on CALL: From Theory and Research to New Directions in Foreign Language Teaching is an easy-to-read, informative review of the current state of computer assisted language learning (CALL) in foreign /second language instruction. The book will appeal to many different audiences. Seasoned language instructors will benefit from the broad reviews of current technology use in the field, as well as the concise summaries of language teaching methodologies of the last fifty years. Instructors who currently use technology will find research results to validate this use. Moreover, instructors who have not integrated technology into instruction will find discussions of technology use that do not goad them into using technology simply for the sake of using it. Instead, they are provided with accessible explanations grounded in current language acquisition theory and practice that describe ways to implement technology use. Pre-service foreign language/second language instructors will be exposed to theory and practices through clear, honest explanations and challenged to apply what they have studied by the *Questions for Reflection* sections found at the end of each chapter. Additionally, graduate students or instructors looking for research topics will find many informed suggestions at the end of the chapters.

Because each chapter in the book shows the theoretical underpinnings of the particular aspect of CALL it discusses, the book serves as a strong reminder that technology use alone is not an effective tool for language instruction. To help instructors integrate theoretically sound technology use into their teaching, *Calling on CALL* presents thirteen chapters focused on various learning objectives, including foreign/second language reading, writing, pronunciation, and sociolinguistic competence. This organization provides readers with a clear idea as to why CALL can work, and how it can help lead foreign/second language instruction in new, pedagogically sound directions.

The introduction and first three chapters present overviews of technology use and pedagogy. Nike Arnold and Lara Ducate, the book's editors, give an up-to-date overview of current technology use both in and out of the classroom in Chapter 1, *CALL: Where Are We and Where Do We Go From Here?* Their aim is to highlight the prevalence of computer use in modern life. The authors point out that many educators

already use computers, both as administrative and classroom aids, but that predominately this use is teacher-centered. They believe that newer technologies, such as computer mediated communication, hold great promise to help shift language instruction toward a more student-centered, constructivist perspective that emphasizes higher order thinking. In Chapter 2, *Situating CALL in the Broader Methodological Context of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: Promises and Possibilities*, Christopher Luke examines "some of the existing and potential connections between foreign language methodology and CALL" (p. 21). His overview of learning theories from behaviorism to social constructivism highlights their positive and negative aspects, especially in regard to how they have been manifested in CALL activities. He notes that new computer mediated communication (CMC) tools now popular among the younger generation –IM, chat, blogs, podcasts—offer their users multiple ways to interact with and process information with one another and with experts, facilitating a constructivist approach to language learning. CALL's ability to collect, analyze, and disperse information in fast, systematized ways can present students with large quantities of authentic, comprehensible input and, in turn, encourage them to express themselves in their foreign/second language in such a way that they develop higher-level language skills related to cultural interaction, social relations, and cognitive strategies – all, according to Luke, an integral part of language instruction in the future.

The book's third chapter, *Multiliteracy: Second Language Literacy in the Multimedia Environment*, written by Margaret Gonglewski and Stayc DuBravac, challenges readers to consider a relatively new educational concept: multiliteracy. A modern definition of literacy cannot focus solely on printed or written text (New London Group, 1996; Stevens, 2005); it must be extended to include the multifaceted nature of information transmission. Meaning is transmitted and processed simultaneously in multiple ways – visually, digitally, culturally, linguistically – and within these media, there can be a diversity of expression. For example, information can be transmitted visually through a still photo or video and accompanied by aural linguistic input in either Arabic or English, or both. Gonglewski and DuBravac present five goals for a multiliteracy-oriented curriculum as well as examples of how CALL activities can be used to reach these goals. As they address each curricular goal, they explain how the CALL activity presented with it meets the goal and connects to the learning theories discussed in the first two chapters. Therefore, this chapter is one of the most significant chapters in the book as it shows how the learning theories that previously drove the creation of CALL activities are now being fused into a new learning theory, multiliteracy, which, in turn, is driving new CALL curricula and design.

Chapters 4 through 7 shift from a focus on theory to a focus on technology use in four specific skill areas: reading, listening, pronunciation, and writing. Chapter 4, *CALL Technologies for L2 Reading*, by Dorothy Chun, reports on research regarding how technology has been used to address issues facing L2 reading. Chun suggests that future CALL software and web-based programs that work to improve L2 reading should evolve from their current focus on lower-order, lexical level reading skills, to higher order reading skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In the fifth chapter, *Listening Comprehension in Multimedia Environments*, Linda Jones reviews second language acquisition (SLA) theory in relation to listening comprehension and multimedia. Jones emphasizes an interactionist perspective in listening: the construction of meaning based on students' interactions with comprehensible input. Jones further explains that adding multimedia input to the interactionist theory leads to Mayer's (2002) cognitive theory of multimedia, according to which learning is more likely to occur when students have simultaneous access to various modes of input with congruent meaning. Mary Grantham O'Brien discusses using CALL in chapter 6, *Teaching Pronunciation and Intonation with Computer Technology*. O'Brien lists the benefits of using computer assisted pronunciation training (CAPT), including the fact that students can take control of their own learning and often are more willing to take risks when working with a non-human interlocutor. O'Brien provides criteria for CAPT software evaluation and discusses five types of CAPT courseware. In the seventh chapter, Liam Murray and Triona Hourigan discuss *Using Micropublishing to Facilitate Writing in the Foreign Language*. The authors give practical examples of micropublishing tools

used to facilitate L2 writing instruction: photo editing, *PowerPoint*, web page creation, blogs, and wikis and add four appendices that include lesson plans, web-based resources, and a rubric for grading web authoring and publishing.

Chapters 8 through 10 show how cultural aspects of language acquisition and development can be taught with the aid of technology. All the chapters have specific examples of assignments and studies that can serve as templates for instructors wishing to use technology to teach culture or to conduct their own research on the topic. In chapter 8, *From Theory to Practice: Intracultural CMC in the L2 Classroom*, Zsuzsana Abrams looks at how CMC has been used in foreign language classes to encourage students not living in the culture of their target language to interact with each other in that target language. She reviews research that shows how students benefit from being active members of online communities. She reasons this is the case because CMC provides learners with opportunities to use their developing language skills in a generative manner within a non-threatening context. Chapter 9 moves the discussion of CMC to that between students in two different cultures. In *Understanding the Other: Intercultural Exchange and CMC*, Lara Lomicka describes a telecollaborative intercultural project between students in France and the United States and notes pitfalls to avoid in intercultural CMC. Lomicka concludes that intercultural CMC is worth the effort as students engaged in such activity are not only using their target language for communication, but they are also using higher order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis to negotiate and communicate their knowledge of culture. Chapter 10, *Gaining Perspective on Culture through CALL*, written by Sebastian Dubreil, does not provide new CALL applications as much as it cements the idea presented in the previous two chapters: to gain competence in a foreign language, students must learn the target language's culture as well. Dubreil reviews the role of cultural instruction in foreign language teaching and claims that CALL activities make culture instruction easier for both students and instructors since CALL activities make the gathering, analysis, reflection, and synthesis of information easier and promote higher order thinking involved in culture learning.

Chapter 11, *Expanding CALL Beyond General Language Classes: The Case of Courses in Language for Specific Purposes*, by Nike Arnold, provides a summary of CALL in language for specific purposes (LSP) classes, with emphasis on practical outcomes and non-traditional delivery of instruction of LSP courses being the wave of the future. Students at all levels of instruction now come to school with high expectations about how technology should be used for instruction. A blackboard and rows of chairs facing a lectern is not what they expect. Today's college students assume their professors will use Smart Boards and present PowerPoint lectures rather than write on chalkboards (Young, 2006). Other students expect they can take their courses online and avoid the constraints of time and space that classroom-based instruction places on them (Duderstadt, 1997). In addition, the growing need for continuing education in all fields has created an ocean of students who not only need access to evolving knowledge within their particular domain but who want to access it in concise and targeted ways that fuse with their schedules (Drucker, 2000a,b; Alejandro, 2001). LSP courses have, for a long time, focused on students' needs and concise, time-constrained delivery, often in non-traditional settings. In this regard, this chapter is a guidepost for all foreign language instructors who want to use CALL to teach in new ways that address modern students and their needs.

Chapter 12, *Computer-Based Testing: Prospects for Innovative Assessment* by Nathan Carr provides a balanced look at computer-based testing (CBT), including computer adaptive testing (CAT) and web-based testing (WBT). Carr also provides guidelines for evaluating CBT and practical advice regarding the implementation of a CBT system. He notes not only the advantages of CBT – more attractive, engaging testing, more authentic test tasks, more easily scored tests, and better test efficiency –, but also that CBT has not really changed tests, simply computerized them. Carr claims that CBT does have the potential to change the nature of language testing because computers can readily handle large amounts of data and more quickly adapt to response than pencil and paper tests.

In the final chapter, chapter 13, *Evaluating CALL Software*, Philip Hubbard presents a CALL software evaluation process that can be used by individual instructors or a department looking for a deliberate set of criteria to use when choosing software for language instruction. He points out that any software evaluation process is comprised of three stages: selection (evaluation), implementation, and assessment. Since most people are primarily concerned with evaluating an application before purchasing or adopting it, the majority of the chapter is devoted to showing in detail how a methodological framework can be used to evaluate CALL software.

In sum, *Calling on CALL* is a valuable addition to any foreign language or second language instructor's library, whether he/she already has an interest in CALL or not. The review of the last 50 years of language acquisition and development theory provided in the first part of the book is concise and informative. Seasoned instructors will be brought up-to-date on current theories, and new, or pre-service, instructors will benefit from highlights of how theory can be applied in instruction. The chapters on technology use are broadly informative rather than narrowly focused on the minutia of a particular technology. In addition, the book encourages instructors who have not yet used technology in their teaching to consider the reality of technology in modern life and provides them with approaches to technology use that are solidly grounded in current pedagogy, practice, and research. Ducate and Arnold have gathered a collection of contributors who have not only gone through the process of integrating technology into their courses, but who are able to explain the benefits, drawbacks, and potential uses for technology in instruction in consistently organized and accessible chapters

One weakness of the book is that it does not provide an alternative view of CALL, such as a when-not-to-use CALL chapter. Such a chapter would be useful in that some types of learning require face-to-face human interaction (Lant, 2002). A chapter that outlines what type of material is best learned in a traditional classroom and what types can be learned using CALL would be helpful for all instructors, especially pre-service teachers. A second weakness is that not enough practical, detailed advice for implementing CALL is given (such as how to set up and use blogs, RSS-feeds, or podcasts), but this is a minor fault as the book sets out to be more a report on the state of CALL in foreign language instruction than a how-to manual. Overall, as a reference to learning theories and how they are incorporated in CALL, or as a supply of CALL activities that one might pursue to integrate into one's instruction, this book is a practical, comprehensible resource.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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