[Book Review]

Language Teacher Education and Technology: Approaches and Practices

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The book titled '*Language teacher education and technology: Approaches and practices*' is comprised of eleven chapters contributed by eleven worldwide educators. This review will examine each section independently, providing an overview and a critique of each Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) course.

The development of CALL was first initiated in the 1960s (Maryt, 1981). In spite of its on-going evolutions, there are still concerns about whether language teachers are adequately competent to utilize appropriate technologies in their teaching context effectively. Various factors can be boiled down to teacher development and training.

In this book, Chapter 1 sets out with an overview of the following 9 chapters (Chapter 2 – Chapter 10). Nine postgraduate language teacher training courses with the use of technologies are exemplified. The training is offered in universities located in Australia, the UK; and the US. The 'context', 'course description', 'features and issues', and 'future directions' of each training course have been discussed in detail. They provide valuable expertise and inspirations for teachers ranging from no experience to professionals.

Chapter 1 is followed by an Appendix, which is a tabulated overview of all the 9 CALL courses included in this book. It provides a succinct summary of each course unit, university, mode, objectives, contents, text and reading, assessment and other requirements. A candid picture is given to the readers for their overview of the content.

Chapter 1 - Teacher Training in Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Voices of Teacher Educators by Jeong-Bae Son & Scott Windeatt

As the opening chapter of this book, the two authors have provided a broad overview of the recent trends, issues, developments and challenges in CALL teacher education. This overview connects to CALL training courses discussed in the subsequent 9 chapters (Chapter 2 to Chapter 10).

In the first section on 'CALL training courses', the authors have identified the commonalities in the 9 training courses. They have explored 'course titles', 'target audience', 'mode of delivery', 'course objectives', 'location within a degree programme', views of learning', 'teaching techniques', 'course contents', 'assessment', and 'course evaluation', which also provide a preview of the courses which will be illustrated in the book. It is very direct and fundamental information of the courses permeating in the book.

The second part of this chapter is on the development of CALL. It captures the overall trends in CALL with specific focuses on changes in course content, the technologies, and student intakes. In the revamp process of the CALL courses, while most of the strengths such as the intertwined connection between the broader and local contexts have been retained, changes have been made on the basis of the earlier versions of the course.

The third part of this chapter is about the challenges encountered by teacher educators. It summarizes the general difficulties in the 9 courses including course design, delivery, to name a few.

The chapter ends with 'The book' and 'Conclusion'. The former basically outlines the organization of the entire book. It introduces the aspects of discussion in which each chapter will focus on. The latter provides the intention and goodwill of this book – a practical guide for language teacher trainers in the digital world.

Chapter 2 – Language and Technology: Theory and Practice, Options and Issues in Computer-Assisted Language Learning by Mike Levy and Paul J. Moore

The course '*Language and Technology*' is offered at the University of Queensland as part of the coursework for a Master of Applied Linguistics programme.

Apart from the background, the role and the content of the course, there is an extensive discussion on the latest developments and technological resources for language learning research and pedagogy. The course teachers and coordinators have taken the unique educational contexts of the student participants into consideration. It is important to note that student perspectives and their goals should be carefully considered as part of the course because the majority of them are international students, who may ultimately return to their home country for work.

Parallel evolution of the course has become a key feature of 'Language and Technology'. Academic materials have been used to provide participants with a basis for discussions, engagements and research developments. This is also to strike a balance between a holistic approach and a practical approach.

Chapter 3 – Blended Approaches to Teaching languages with Computers by Paul Gruba

The course '*Technology and Language Learning*' is offered at the University of Melbourne as part of the coursework for a Master of Applied Linguistics programme.

There are a few special features of this course. First, student participants are given the privilege to the university 'staff' page where they can learn to utilize online tools (Blackboard) in full. Another observable strength is the choice of some assigned readings for the designated key messages. These key messages are also in line with all the essential language skills such as speaking, reading and so on. The incorporation of technologies in the in-class debates or discussions with the use of Skype, Wikis, mobile phones and along with others can provide participants with some hands-on experience. It is also the intention of the course facilitators to provide such opportunities so that students can have the necessary knowledge and experience to operate the technologies should they aim at a teaching position in higher education. It is hoped that the more familiarity they are equipped with, the better they can anticipate any problems and tackle upcoming

challenges.

However, it should be argued that the demonstration of critical thinking skills is even more crucial than the familiarity of any online tools. Despite the fact that students may not be able to describe a realistic landscape of educational technology, their ability to critique the tools may be more notable. Eventually, these existing tools may become 'extinct' very soon. So it is more fundamental to look into culturally appropriate new media or new literacies in the future.

Chapter 4 – CALL Research, Practice and Teachers' Role by Jeong-Bae Son

The course 'Computer-Assisted Language Learning' is offered at the University of Southern Queensland as one of the elective courses for a Master of Applied Linguistics programme (Applied Linguistics) or Master of Education (TESOL) programme.

The three modules including 'background', 'research' and 'language teachers in CALL environments' are delivered in mainly 2 approaches: Role-based approach and Task-based contextual approach. The former provides multiple roles for the student participants in a CALL setting, namely tutor, facilitator, evaluator and so on. This could be a way to induce a more thorough understanding of them.

The latter connects selected readings, learning activities together with the participant's unique situations and backgrounds. They can have the experience of using virtual learning environment on Moodle, online discussion forums, and meetings on Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom. It is apparent that students' online participation via these assigned platforms can contribute to meaningful interactions and collaborations. Captivating data relating to the degree of interaction among participants, both the quality and quantity, can also provide information for future course refurbishment.

Another characteristic of this course is the use of criteria-based assessment. Students should be clearly guided with a fixed set of predetermined assessment criteria. This is believed to provide clearer objectives prior to the submission of their work, particularly for summative assessments.

With the strengths of this course, the writer mentions the importance of being self-directed in an online environment. In this regard, it may be more helpful if the writer can

shed some light on how to give more incentives to reinvigorate and sustain participants' efforts throughout the course.

Chapter 5 – Language Learning and Technology: A Thirty-Year Journey by Gary Motteram

The course '*Language Learning and Technology*' is offered at the University of Manchester, with the longest history of a hybrid course integrating language teacher training and technology in the United Kingdom.

The most impressive strength of this course is the wide variety of technologies involved. With a blended learning approach incorporating both face-to-face and mainly Blackboard, the participants have explored the use of wikis, corpora and concordancing, language learning videos, embodied conversational agents (Siri), and many more other mobile devices. To further advocate the use of technologies for the specific purpose of language learning, games in the virtual world such as Trace Effects have also been explored. Perhaps some of these may be highly relevant to language learning, some may not. Therefore, it is particularly important to have acknowledged the constant rate of change of technologies by the writer.

There is only one small paragraph on 'Future directions', which appears to be a bit out of proportion in length, given the long history of the course. This may not reflect the needs of further investigation of the use of technologies in CALL. While there is a growing trend of adopting artificial intelligence (AI) in language learning, more exposure to the latest digital technologies for CALL is essential. And perhaps, tying in more research or action research elements in the course can be part of the expansion of this particular course.

Chapter 6 – Balancing Theory and Practice: Developing Competent, Reflective CALL Practitioners by Eddy Moran

The course '*Balancing Theory and Practice*' is offered at the University of Stirling, as part of the Master of Science in TESOL (CALL) programme or the Master of Science in TESOL (Applied Linguistics) programme.

From the description of the course content, much emphasis has been placed on language learning theories. All the 11 topics in this course are strongly correlated to at least one technology. Student participants are also given a lot of opportunities to devise different materials online. They are encouraged to consider the link between theory and research in language acquisition in a CALL context.

It is mentioned in the 'Future directions' section that social media should be included. I shall argue that the application of Web 2.0, in general, should be based its relevance to the course objectives. If Facebook is the writer's consideration, then there should be a strong link between its course intended objectives and the application of Facebook. In fact, it may be more fascinating to witness the usefulness or effectiveness of the online materials developed by the course participants. Hence, this entails the inclusion of action research, which may also be another deliberation.

Chapter 7 – Training Teachers to Create and Use Materials for Computer-Assisted Language Learning by Scott Windeatt

The course '*Computer-Assisted Language Learning Learning and Technology*' is offered at Newcastle University as an elective course for Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics and TESOL.

In this chapter, the author writes at extensive length about participants' evaluation of the course, especially on the CALL module. It is indeed very useful to include students' voices for the writer's reference and, more importantly, for other course developers' future consideration. There is also a very striking picture to see how the course participants benefit from the CALL course building onto their career.

Apart from the feedback of the course participants, the writer has also considered the pragmatic needs of a CALL course. For instance, he values the importance of turning students' ideas into practice in terms of actually delivering the materials online and piloting them. This is part of the course assessment. Also, the exposure to various authoring software for self-created materials is in line with the timely revitalization of the course to suit the needs of the students.

It should be recognized that this course aims at bringing together the language learning softwares and web-based sources. While utilizing these tools, it is essential to draw the link between the tools and language learning. This course developer has set a remarkable

example as to the adjustments of tools (e.g. from Microtext to Black Magic and to OWL Guide). Therefore, their future intent on the use of mobile technologies and the investigation of Communities of Inquiry should be highly appraised.

Chapter 8 – Preparing CALL Professionals: A Survey Course in a CALL Degree Programme by Greg Kessler

The course 'Computers in Language Teaching' is offered at the Ohio University as part of the Master of Applied Linguistics Programme.

Similar to most of the CALL-related courses, this course is attractive in multifaceted perspectives. The most appealing one is the balance between theory and practice. They allocate substantial time for CALL theory and research as well as first-hand experience on the creation of materials. Constructivism is not just discussed but also practised throughout the course. This is also to support the participants' group project-based learning. Besides, the role of technology is heavily emphasized in a sense that course participants can be trained to be CALL experts for their own future career.

As pointed out towards the end of this chapter, teachers should be critical enough to evaluate future technologies within their own contexts of language and culture teaching. This also requires a lot of confidence and troubleshooting skills as detailed in the previous section.

Chapter 9 – Teacher Training with CALL Online (Distance): A Project- and Standards-Based Approach by Christine Bauer-Ramazani

The course '*Computer-Assisted Language Learning Online*' is a course offered at Saint Michael's College as part of the Master of Arts (TESOL) programme. This chapter focuses on the content of CALL online session, which is for the purpose of fulfilling a need for training in technology.

One unique feature of this online course is the meticulous alignment of the content components and the standards. Both TESOL Technology Standards Framework and ISTE Standards have been mapped with all the 13 weekly topics. It is easy to identify which topics can be linked to a particular set of goals.

Due to the online learning mode of this course, interaction has to be strategically maintained. There are various forms of discussion including forums for the interplay of 'content', 'pedagogy' and 'technology' among the course participants. In fact, this kind of tripartite consideration should be a focal point in all CALL courses.

Among all the 4 future directions, the wish-list about enticing teachers to be CALL users and rewarding CALL practices appears to be most thought-provoking. In fact, similar to other teaching pedagogies, teacher practitioners aim at putting theories into practice. It is an appreciative move to see how the author of this chapter sets a role model herself leading her own course participants in her self-directed professional development.

Chapter 10 – An Invitation to CALL: Foundations of Computer-Assisted Language Learning by Philip Hubbard

The course 'CALL Mini Course' is a course offered at Stanford University. It is a complement to an ESL/EFL methodology class.

This chapter introduces the eight units of this course and the pertinent technologies adopted in each of them. There is a detailed description of each unit topic, theory, goals, activities, and technologies involved. The writer has also made use of his role in the course and his expertise to share his views in academic conferences.

The section on "Future directions' is relatively more condensed, compared to other chapters. Probably due to the nature of this course and the smaller amount of students, there may be fewer insights on CALL courses with the integration of technologies.

Chapter 11 – Should We Offer a CALL Course by Denise E. Murray

As a concluding chapter of the book, the writer has contributed to CALL teacher education. To tie everything together, she has focused on CALL content and processes corresponding to the previous chapters on the book. There is an emphasis on the needs for formal CALL coursework, institutional support, and ongoing professional development.

Conclusion

Language Teacher Education and Technology: Approaches and Practices is very likely to appeal to language teacher educators. This is a very resourceful book, providing various angles to those who are to reflect upon an existing English Language course integrated with technology or those who will develop one.

Technology has been an integral part of language learning and teaching in most contexts. In spite of the contextualized nature of all the CALL courses, this book offers information that is not only relevant to the western regions mentioned but also transferrable elsewhere. Besides, even though all the CALL courses reported in this volume are at a master's degree level, the cited theoretical and practical implications for both classroom practices and further research are definitely applicable to English language learning in other levels.

Due to the discrete nature of this book, all the nine courses are reported in a separate chapter with a whole panoply of insightful pedagogical, technological and assessment ideas. However, the editors could have differed the various CALL courses in the book by highlighting the unique features of each course as well as the relationships of different courses from their perspectives. This could have also provided better overall cohesion.

Based on the pervasive and yet forever changing nature of technology as acknowledged by most of the authors in this book, how ubiquitous language learning be enhanced in the digital world is still the point in question. Furthermore, while the teaching content, delivery, and assessments are mentioned, it may be also worth looking into how new technologies can personalize assessment feedback for students' more constructive learning. As 'evolution' has been mentioned more than 30 times in this book, more research studies to inform the teacher practitioners' practices should be highly encouraged.

References

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