

Guest Editor's Introduction to Special Theme Issue: Contextualising CALL Locally and Globally

Jeong-Bae Son (sonjb@usq.edu.au)
University of Southern Queensland, Australia

This article has been anonymously peer-reviewed and accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, an international, peer-reviewed journal that focuses on issues and trends in pedagogies and learning in national and international contexts. ISSN 1833-4105.
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Introduction

This special theme issue publishes a set of refereed papers from APACALL (<http://www.apacall.org/>) and the GLoCALL 2007 Conference, which was held at Hanoi University in Hanoi and SEAMEO RETRAC in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam from 2 to 7 November 2007. It presents diverse engagements with computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in local and global contexts. In line with the aims of the GLoCALL conference (<http://glocall.org/>), particularly, the authors of the papers share their knowledge and experience on how to use computer technology to make language learning more effective and pleasant and how to adapt the technology to develop language teachers' professionalism in CALL.

Overview

A total of nine anonymously peer reviewed articles have been selected for inclusion in this issue. The first article, by Peter Gobel, examines English as a foreign language (EFL) students' on-task and off-task behaviour using two intelligent tutoring systems in three CALL classrooms at a Japanese university. Through a study of the frequency and impact of different kinds of off-task behaviour, the author argues that the students' off-task behaviour is strongly correlated with their overall performance and post-test scores.

In the second article, Steve Engler, Christopher Hoskins and Sylvan Payne report the results of two pilot projects involving Japanese university students' use of a specific software application supplementing academic readings in English courses. By analysing the students' scores on reading comprehension quizzes and their responses to questionnaires, the authors point out that computer-generated comics are helpful for comprehension of academic readings.

Jeong-Bae Son uses the third article to explore Web-based language learning (WBLL) activities including pre-created Web activities, task-based Web activities and teacher-made Web activities. The author describes a language learning Website, which was originally developed for English as a second language (ESL) students at an Australian university, and recommends that the Website, as a supplementary resource, can be integrated into the ESL classroom.

The fourth article, by Antonie Alm, looks at the use of authentic video and Internet technologies such as blogs, wikis and YouTube in a German language class at a New Zealand University. The author discusses the benefits of using a German soap opera, a class blog and a class wiki, while reporting that her students were motivated by the use of video and Internet tools and enjoyed the process of producing their own video clips collaboratively.

In the fifth article, Mizuho Iinuma and Hiroaki Chiyokura make use of 3 dimensional computer graphics (3DCG) and a geographic information system (GIS) for content-based instruction (CBI) in an EFL course at a Japanese university. Through a post-questionnaire, the authors asked students in the course what they thought about the new technologies. The results of the study indicate that the students enjoyed the course with a feeling of gaining better understanding of Vietnam and 3D technology was highly effective in presenting spatial and visual information.

The sixth article, by Zhihong Lu, Xiaohui Huang and Juan Sun, shifts the focus to teachers, with a case study of the teacher's roles in a computer-assisted speaking class in China. The authors claim that the role of the teacher should be multidimensional and the teacher needs to play multiple roles to promote students' language proficiency development in CALL classrooms.

In the seventh article, Jacquelyn D. Cyrus looks into the comfort levels of in-service teachers in Micronesia in using various computer technologies. After a three-week teacher training course on technology integration, the author found significant increase in the teachers' comfort levels and concludes that participants in the course have gained technical skills they need to engage with the curriculum and educational technology standards in their contexts.

The eighth article, by Pramela Krish, investigates a group of instructors' experiences with online teaching at a virtual university in Malaysia. The author employed in-depth interviews to identify the instructors' perceived roles they play, difficulties they face and their ways of dealing with problems while teaching English online. The findings of the study indicate that the instructors are aware of the importance of knowledge of and skills for online teaching and flexibility in online environments.

In the final article, Gordon Joyes, Carol Hall and Siew Ming Thang highlight the development of a generic module for the training of online tutors through an international collaboration between a British university and a Chinese university. The authors describe the tutor training module and discuss the use of the module at a Malaysian university. As noted in the article, further collection and analysis of data are warranted to see the effectiveness of the module in local contexts.

It is clear that these nine articles exhibit considerable diversity of CALL and efforts to contextualise CALL locally and globally. They expand our understanding of CALL research and practice and provide us with ideas of how CALL can be used in multiple ways. The editor hopes that this issue encourages readers to begin or continue their adventures in the world of CALL.

Acknowledgments

The Editor is grateful to the authors of the articles for their thought provoking contributions to this special theme issue. He is also pleased to thank the following individuals who provided constructive and rigorous referees' reports about the submitted articles: Antonie Alm; Arif Altun; Jacqui Cyrus; Steve Engler; Peter Gobel; Debra Hoven; Mizuho Iinuma; Pramela Krish; Deny A. Kwary; Andrew Lian; John Paul Loucky; Zuihong Lu; John McDonald; Denise E. Murray; Klaus-Dieter Rossade; Vance Stevens; N. M. Terhune; Siew Ming Thang; Juanita Wolrige; and Jeehwan Yun.