[Book Review]

WORLDCALL: Sustainability and Computer-Assisted Language Learning

White Jeremy (jwhite@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp)
Ritsumeikan University, Japan
Mills Daniel (dmr11096@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp)
Ritsumeikan University, Japan

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WORLDCALL is "the worldwide professional association for teachers and educators interested in Computer-Assisted Language Learning" (p. vii). The organization has, to date, held four conferences: Melbourne, Australia 1998, Banff, Canada 2003, Fukuoka, Japan 2008, and Glasgow, Scotland 2013. The theme of the 2013 conference was 'Sustainability and Computer-Assisted Language Learning' and this proceedings book represents a wide collection of research presented on the subject.

The book titled 'WORLDCALL: Sustainability and Computer-Assisted Language Learning' is divided into five parts: Teacher Education and CALL, Normalization of CALL, CALL Systems, Mobile-Assisted Learning, and Innovation in CALL. Sustainability is defined in this text as an e-learning "system" or "product" that has met four criteria including adoption by multiple universities, proof that it is advantageous to teaching and learning, potential for extrapolation to additional contexts and uses, and lack of dependence on a limited number of individuals for "maintenance, use and further development" (p. vii). This review will examine each section individually, provide an overview of the research associated with the topic, and a critique of the content.

Part One: Teacher Education and CALL

The 'Teacher Education and CALL' section is the largest of the book, containing five papers. This segment covers topics concerning practical teacher education and CALL research such as podcast production, telecollaboration, wikis and VoiceThreads, and e-Learning courses. In addition, one paper, entitled "Developing Perceptions of Learning Affordances in CALL Teachers", presented a more theoretical perspective of teacher education and CALL.

The research presented in this section provided a range of tools and theories for teachers to consider when continuing their own education in relation to CALL. Haines (Part 1-1), for example, examines how teachers identify the affordances offered by language learning technology in an effort to select tools that support their practice. Haines defined affordance as "the potential that teachers perceive in a particular technology tool that will support learning and teaching activities in their educational contexts" (p. 8). This concept is one of significant importance for all educational professional who use language learning technology in the classroom as the continued availability and pressure to use technology can make teachers feel overawed. As Haines stated "adopting every new tool that emerges is clearly unsustainable practice for teachers and their students" (p. 8).

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized in the studies featured in this chapter. However, it is important to note that the sample sizes were relatively small in each of the research projects, which may make it difficult to extrapolate the results to a wider audience. The variety of data collection methods used can help to triangulate the data collected, but further research will need to be conducted to build upon the work presented in this volume.

Part Two: Normalization of CALL

The second section of this book, Normalization of CALL, is made up of only three papers, which is unfortunate given the importance of the topic, and does not reflect positively on a book highlighting sustainability in the field.

Part two focuses on how CALL is integrated into the classroom, how to improve interactions within CALL by gaining an understanding of what students do while interacting with computers, and how to develop a sustainable CALL environment within an educational institution. Like section one, section two is divided into practical research and theoretical concepts. A major drawback of this chapter is the lack of successful instances in the Normalization of CALL. Ward (Part 2 - 8), for example, provides the reader with a theoretical discussion on the paradigm needed to make CALL sustainable in today's learning situation. What is imperative about this paper is that the author is looking back on sustainability theory of the past and showing the reader that many of the concepts of sustainability presented in the 1990s and early 2000s are still relevant in today's CALL environment. The utilization of these concepts may assist in the implementation of successful CALL programs while reducing the chances of the failures that were seen in the past. Ward in her conclusion suggests that a hybrid or agile software development paradigm would help detect the need for CALL and ensure suitable CALL materials are developed for the learners in a real-world setting. This is an important theoretical discussion, but does not provide much in the way of practical applications for teachers. Beatriz, Martins, and Moreira (Part 2-1) explored the integration of CALL into the classroom at the college level in Brazil. This study is more practical, and could be of use to educational professionals. However, at only three months long, and limited to the Brazilian context, it is difficult to see how this study represents normalization of CALL beyond the parameters of the research location. The authors of this paper duly recognize this and indicate the need for further research in this area. For the reader, it would have been beneficial to

understand some CALL instances that have become a normalized part of the education process.

Part Three: CALL Systems

Part three of the World CALL book provides insight into three different CALL systems that are being used around the world today.

What is of particular interest in this section is that two of the systems presented aim at developing autonomous learning in students. Bandos (Part 3-1) for example, presents UdeC English Online, a system developed "on the basis of a needs analysis, considering learners' personal interests, goals, their motivation to learn English, academic and workforce requirement skills, learners' study preferences, and our concerns about how to tackle typical linguistic difficulties of Spanish learners of English" (p. 156). This paper, and part three in general, demonstrates that there is a desire to create learning practices that move outside of the confinements and limitations of the classroom, while paying careful consideration to the needs of the students for which the program has been developed. However, while there are many positives in this section; a criticism would be that the reader can take little away from reading these papers, except to say that three interesting and effective systems are in existence. Teachers reading this section, and the book in general, are most likely looking for CALL systems that they could incorporate into their classroom to enhance the learning process of their students. While all three systems presented in this section have benefits for the students that use them, the difficultly for other institutions to set up such systems may be too large a hurdle to overcome. In general, part three hints at the need to allow students to become more autonomous in order to contribute to the sustainability of CALL programs, as more students move into less traditional forms of education. This message is something that all who read this section can use in their own classroom.

Part Four: Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Part four of this book outlines several recent Mobile-Assisted Language Learning studies conducted around the world. The studies in this chapter come from Hong Kong, Australia, Korea and Catalonia. The papers in part four present data regarding students' experience and perceptions towards mobile language, as well as details regarding mobile application development and the use of a popular messaging software.

Because mobile devices are both portable and highly accessible, their usefulness is not limited to only in-class, teacher-directed learning activities. Ma (Part 4-1) categorized student responses by location, formality, and locus of control in order to understand the wide range of contexts and learning styles that are possible with mobile technology. Both Steel (Part 4-2) and Kim (Part 4-3) addressed the affordance of self-directed learning in non-formal locations in their research.

Plana, Gimeno, Appel, and Hopkins (Part 4-4) conducted a study of ninety-five Catalonian university students studying English as a Foreign Language. Over the

course of twelve weeks the participants received three reading activities with comprehension questions each week through the *WhatsApp* mobile application. Using this application, students were able to receive instant feedback helping them to stay motivated. The results of this research showed that consistent use of the application led to more positive attitudes towards reading in English and an increase in students' confidence.

A possible criticism of the studies in this section might be that the researchers relied too heavily on self-reported data to draw their conclusions, which can be inaccurate. This may be a limitation of studies in this field because of the difficulty associated with accurately gauging usage of mobile technology in non-formal settings.

Part Five: Innovation in CALL

Part five of this proceedings book offers several unique insights into innovation in the field of CALL. The topics included in this section include the use of eye tracking research to examine human interaction with technology in CALL environments, text analyzers for the facilitation of L2 writing, and the application of digital stories to a multi-literacy approach to learning.

One of the most innovative practical ideas presented in Part 5-3 was the use of handcrafted video clips for digital storytelling. The participants took part in a four-step process in the development of their handcrafted video. In the first stage (experience) they read a short story and discussed aspects of its plot. In the second stage (conceptualizing), the participants learned designed elements of their video. Finally, in stages three (analyzing) and four (applying) they examined their intentions and made the digital story. The researchers found that this was a good example of sustainable CALL because it did not require specialized knowledge to execute and demonstrated to students how they could use their personal devices to create content in the target language. What is good about this paper is that the author has outlined the method clearly, so that the idea using digital stories could be incorporated into any classroom. In contrast, O'Rourke, Prendergast, Shi, Smith, and Stickler's study regarding eye tracking, while interesting and valuable research, does require specialized knowledge and equipment, which could prevent its application in most classroom settings. While the technology does fit the definition of sustainability in the introduction of this book, its implication lacks immediate practical benefits in the classroom, which may prevent its widespread application.

Conclusion

One of the major criticisms of CALL research and application is that there is an over concentration on what is seen as new and exciting, but little work is put into making these technologies sustainable and to continue research once the excitement has worn off. The hype cycle, created by the information technology advisory company Gartner (2008), shows that the process of technology adoption can be represented in five phases. In the first and second phases, called the technology trigger and peak of inflated expectations respectively, an innovation is introduced and is bolstered by early successes. When the technology inevitably experiences some failures in

application, we enter the third phase, which is called the trough of disillusionment. It is here that there is a danger to abandon the technology and look for the next "big thing". If this urge is resisted a technology can pass through phases four and five of the cycle, which are named the slope of enlightenment and the plateau of productivity. It is in these latter stages that the research featured in *WORLDCALL: Sustainability and Computer-Assisted Language Learning* is situated. This book is a lesson for all educational technologists that we should look past the latest fads and instead concentrate on building sustainable platforms that places students' learning as the chief priority. As the series editors rightfully assert in the conclusion of the text, "if the focus is on the pedagogy driving the technology, this will enable sustainability" (p. 329).

Reference

Gartner (2008). *Mastering the hype cycle: How to choose the right innovation at the right time.* Harvard Business Press: Boston, MA.