

Chapter 22

Testing a CALL Effectiveness Model: Online Media Can Open New Learning Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews developments in the field of CALL evaluation. It includes the implications of accepted CALL and computer-assisted second-language acquisition (CASLA) principles for improving instruction. It blends studies of thorough research with appropriate, good practice. It suggests how to build effective flipped learning programs and the questions to ask before designing or using CALL. It suggests pedagogical implications and areas for fruitful research into the use of richer CALL applications. Using accepted CALL principles, it provides a practical model for comparing and evaluating the relative effectiveness of CALL and Computer-Mediated Communications-enhanced language learning versus traditional printed texts and simple audio.

INTRODUCTION

It may be easy to offer generalized reasons for using CALL and web-based resources to enhance language education, such as these two common reasons: (1) Due to student preferences, i.e., because the current generation of youth like using the latest mobile and electronic gadgets and most respond positively to E-Learning and CALL. (2) Because E-Learning and CALL-based media often provide more amusing and interesting methods and materials for both students and teachers. A convincing comparative study, however, needs to show specifically *how*, in what areas and to what extent CALL-resources provide for meeting language learners' needs in areas (a)-(d) as outlined here: (a) learner fit, (b) explicit teaching of specific purpose vocabulary and grammar, (c) interaction with the computer and other people, and (d) strategy development (from Chapelle & Jamieson, 2008, p. 209).

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Testing a CALL Effectiveness Model

There is now general agreement that Chapelle's (2001) six guiding criteria and her related judgmental and empirical questions need to be asked during online course design, instruction, and course evaluation stages. This will produce better learning effectiveness, enjoyment, and efficiency by more rigorously evaluating any proposed CALL program or web-enhanced course for its (1) language learning potential, (2) learner fit, (3) meaning focus, (4) authenticity, (5) impact, and (6) practicality.

Jamieson and Chapelle (2004) further explain these parameters, providing a useful dedicated methodology for CALL research and evaluation, to which they both have made immense contributions over the years. With the above goals in mind, this chapter will outline what similar research needs to include in order to provide a necessary and sufficient answer to the dual questions, "Why use CALL at all?" and if using it, "How can CALL be used most effectively to enhance both language and content learning?"

Another immensely practical guide, which seems destined to become a classic in the field of CALL pedagogy, is Chapelle and Jamieson's (2008) *Tips for teaching with CALL: Practical approaches to Computer-Assisted Language Learning*. With a chapter on CALL use in each of the four skill areas, two others on grammar and vocabulary areas, and two final chapters on content-based language and enhancing communication skills, this text includes recommended sites on an included CD. Its eight chapters offers teachers numerous practical tips. Under each chapter's SLA research-based recommendations are three parts: (1) a description when using CALL to teach that area, (2) a summary of research findings about that area, and (3) suggestions for both classroom and website activities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: A REVIEW OF THE FIELD WITH INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGES FOR COMPUTER-ASSISTED SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RESEARCH

Clearly just as many tools are double-edged, with both helpful and harmful uses, such is also true about much online media. It can be used to educate or to recruit terrorists, and to teach positive or negative behaviors. This one is led to agree with the conclusions drawn by Karen Janowski (2008), that "It's not about the tools; It's about the possibilities." Although many have emphasized that tools are secondary to the pedagogy, we must not lose sight of the reality that tools do make things possible, easier and more effective than when we do not have access to them. Among the possibilities that Computer-Mediated Communications (CMC) and CALL tools can offer are the ability to offer greater (1) differentiation or individualization in instruction, (2) greater engagement or active involvement in learning, and (3) better accessibility.

Among the kinds of enhanced engagement computerized media can make possible are such things as creating a podcast or video that demonstrates understanding and synthesis of the concept or content. Merely listening passively to lectures with print-based responses has set limits and can be boring. Far richer interaction can take place when students can also explore subjects by participating in online, interactive activities, and engage with the material by creating a project that demonstrates authentic learning. Accessibility for students limited by language, perceptual, or physical weaknesses can be much better when instruction is given in more personalized ways using assistive technologies. As Janowski notes:

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