

Editorial Preface

Special issue on the GLoCALL 2018 Conference and 15th ChinaCALL Conference 2018

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Jointly sponsored by China Computer-Assisted Language Learning Association (ChinaCALL), Pacific Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (PacCALL), and hosted by the Institute of Online Education, Beijing Foreign Studies University and the Language Centre, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, the GLoCALL 2018 Conference & 15th ChinaCALL Conference 2018 was held in Suzhou, China, from August 16th to 18th, 2018. The conference comprised four keynote speeches of world-renowned CALL scholars: Dr. Philip Hubbard of Stanford University, Prof. Regine Hampel of the Open University, Prof. Yueguo Gu of Beijing Foreign Studies University, and Prof. Thomas Robb of Kyoto Sangyo University, along with four symposia featuring various themes in CALL and 110 individual presentations. During the three-day conference, more than 400 teachers and researchers from overseas and across China exchanged their knowledge and expertise in CALL. As the usual practice of ChinaCALL conference, we also broadcasted keynote speeches and symposium presentations alive this time. More than 70,000 people joined the sessions online, with knowledge being disseminated in a wide scale.

We felt greatly honored to have two articles from our keynote speakers Dr. Hubbard and Prof. Hampel in our special issue. The remaining three papers were selected from the number of quality conference submissions.

In the first paper, Dr. Hubbard, a world-renowned researcher in CALL, drawing upon his experience across almost four decades, summarized five key lessons from the past to the future of CALL, which involved understanding 1) the cycle of technology adoption, 2) the dimensions of technology mediation in the language learning process, 3) the promise and limitations of CALL research, 4) the critical importance of teacher education and professional development, and 5) the need for learner training for effective technology use. A new technology device or application or concept does not by itself lead to revolutionary shifts in language education. Rather, the technology mediates between the learner and other entities.

Dr. Ursula Stickler and Prof. Regine Hampel addressed “Qualitative Research In Online Language Learning - What Can It Do?” by examining the theoretical foundations of qualitative research while evaluating several learning theories. Based on the realist vs. relativist ontologies, they compared quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. They argued that “in a sociocultural framework, going beyond quantitative research approaches is necessary to adequately understand the experiences” of using ICT.

In “Exploring Collocations with The Prime Machine”, Dr. Stephen Jeaco documented how their Prime Machine was designed to help language learners master features of English collocations with five crucial considerations. He provided a good survey of how textbook and dictionary resources treated collocational information and how several existing corpus tools helped learners search and locate collocational knowledge automatically, given a corpus. He then described their own system by highlighting features of viewing collocation relationships clearly and presenting full collocations in typical word-order to improve understanding and retention.

Dr. Hao Yang and Dr. Zhiqiang Ma in their paper “Challenges to Overcome and Scaffolding to Build on: Flipping a Humanities Course in a Chinese University” looked at how university students adapted to flipped classrooms implemented in a public university in China. Their results indicated that participating students developed theories of learning from their peers and an awareness of intrinsic motivation.

The fifth paper, “Machine Learning Based Taxonomy and Analysis of English Learners’ Translation Errors” authored by Dr. Ying Qin, explored the use of a Chinese EFL learners’ translation corpus to examine the taxonomy of translation errors. Further comparison to the intuitive or theoretical studies on translation taxonomy shows some phenomenon accompanied by language skill improvement of Chinese learners.

To summarize, the five papers have offered a comprehensive picture on the current CALL theories, methodology, the use of emerging technologies in teaching, and teacher perceptions on CALL. We hope this special issue can contribute to our readers’ understanding of CALL, and enhance their teaching and research practice in the long run!

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Guest editors