Chapter 11

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.


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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).

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.
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