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CALL from the margins: effective dissemination of CALL research and good practices

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Abstract

The symbolic location of EUROCALL's 2004 conference in Vienna offered to both new members from Eastern Europe and established members from the West an opportunity to review the relationship between computer assisted language learning (CALL) and language teaching in general. CALL is defined as an 'academic field that explores the role of information and communication technologies in language learning and teaching' (EUROCALL 1999; for a discussion of CALL as an interdisciplinary research domain, see Levy, 1997). CALL practitioners and researchers have long been aware of the importance of recognition within the broader discipline of language learning and teaching, as the joint EUROCALL/CALICO/IALL Research Policy Statement (EUROCALL 1999) explicitly noted. Yet CALL in fact remains marginalised in several ways which this article will explore. In seeking to promote more effective dissemination of good teaching practices and especially of research in CALL, the article will evoke the UK's predominant role in introducing Quality Assurance (QA) to higher education teaching and research – a trend which the Bologna Process will surely intensify throughout Europe. The author will draw on his current role as language research coordinator at the UK's Open University, and on substantial experience as a QA insider in both teaching and research, to analyse successes and failures in dissemination of both research and good teaching/learning practices. He will propose strategies for moving CALL from the margins towards the centre of language learning. In so doing, he will also provide an incidental overview of some key journals and conferences in the domain.

1 CALL and the mainstream

This article adduces evidence that research and development in CALL remains peripheral to the concerns of many language specialists in the academic sphere. This perception is reflected in the article's title. The conference presentation, however, drew on a different analogy, that of a mill-race. Just as a sluice gate diverts part of a water course into a stream which drives a water-wheel to power a mill, so CALL research progresses separately from the mainstream of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in both teaching and research. The mill-race may be fast-moving and productive, but it can be ignored by those sedately fishing the mainstream.

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Five years ago, Chesters (1999: 8) was already asserting that 'we should feel mainstream', but in a paper situating CALL at the confluence of three domains – information and communication technologies, teaching and learning, and languages – he opted for different images, those of a niche or subset, and argued for action at an institutional level. Two years later, Davies (2001: 19) again underlined the need for a change in status: those conducting CALL research or development work 'often find themselves sitting uncomfortably in a twilight zone which has yet to gain official recognition'. Skehan too recognised the gap between CALL and mainstream research: 'in the main, second language acquisition research and the applications of technology to language learning have remained relatively separate areas' (Skehan, 2003: 391). Davies and Fitzpatrick acknowledge the need for *more* CALL research: 'not enough attention is being devoted to questions of how the new media can systematically aid language acquisition and learning' (Davies & Fitzpatrick, 2003: 5), but it is open to doubt whether *more* research will, on its own, achieve wider recognition of CALL as a research domain, an objective set out in the 1999 Research Policy Statement (EUROCALL 1999), which aimed:

> (i) to establish a clearer understanding for departments, institutions, professional associations and decision-making bodies of the range of activities represented in the field, and (ii) to provide an organised and consistent perspective on the rubrics under which these activities should be evaluated.

2 Evidence of continuing marginalisation: books, journals and conferences

I have not been able to undertake a systematic survey of standard works on theories of language learning, SLA research and the practice of language teaching, but a quick chronological survey of the best-thumbed books on my own shelves supports a claim of CALL marginalisation. *The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards *et al.*, 1992) devotes two pages out of 424 to CALL. Although by then computing had been actively harnessed to language learning for at least a decade and a half, and a substantial corpus of research existed, there is no mention in the theoretical work of Towell and Hawkins (1994), nor even in the 'purple bible of SLA', Rod Ellis's otherwise comprehensive *Study of Second Language Acquisition* (1994): 'CALL', 'computer', 'online' and 'virtual' are completely absent from his index, although 'context' receives good coverage (but only in the traditional tutored/naturalistic sense) and ICT (information and communication technology) is not wholly absent since the VARBRUL program for Labovian data analysis is included. There is likewise no allusion to CALL in Johnson (1996).

The most recent handbook on SLA theory omits CALL (Mitchell & Myles, 1998), while Byram and Fleming (1998) have just one reference to 'general technological developments'. Skehan's own *Cognitive Approach to Language Learning* (1998) mentions a single study, referenced as 'computer program, instruction via'. Arnold's overview of *Affect* (Arnold, 1999) covers 'the human computer' (a reflection activity) but makes no reference to the real thing.

The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning* (Byram, 2000) has a superbly concise three pages on CALL and a two-page entry on the Internet, but even

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taken with the many cross-references, the topic occupies less than 1% of the whole reference work. Even in otherwise excellent books on domains where CALL might be expected to be accorded a substantial role, it is strangely absent: Dörnyei's *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (2001) omits CALL entirely, while Benson's *Teaching and Researching Autonomy* devotes a single six-page chapter (and two isolated references) to the topic in a book of 260 pages.

Rod Ellis maintains his silence on CALL in *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching* (2003), while one of the most influential handbooks for language teachers, Vivian Cook's *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching* (3rd edition 2003) has but one dated and dismissive reference.

This silence can be addressed. A new book written for university language teachers (Coleman & Klapper, in press) has a chapter on CALL, a second on computer-mediated communication (CMC) and another on tandem learning, while in the Open University's latest handbook for students, *Success with Languages* (Hurd & Murphy, in press), ICT is systematically integrated into every chapter.

Nevertheless, today it remains possible for the most respected authors to sideline CALL as negligible, to ignore all 5,301 articles in Jung's cumulative database (Jung, 2004). The challenge for EUROCALL is to make ICT part of the very fabric of the discipline of SLA, woven into its every facet, rather than a separate and detachable adjunct: to make it impossible for experts to continue to cold-shoulder CALL. It should become unthinkable to write any research-based book on language learning without taking into account the role of ICT.

Moving from books to journals, it seems that articles in CALL and 'mainstream' SLA do not evidence mutual respect, for example in citations. Articles in a central CALL journal will typically cite contributions to *Applied Linguistics* and to the *Modern Language Journal*, but the reverse is much less common. The *Modern Language Journal* has at least included two CALL articles in each of 2003 and 2004: *Applied Linguistics* has no CALL article this century. There is also an unexplained omission to remedy: while *MLJ*'s 'In Other Professional Journals' section covers *ALSIC, CALICO Journal*, *Computer Assisted Language Learning, Language Learning and Technology* and *System* among its 104 titles (http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/mlj/journals.swf.htm), it does not include *ReCALL*.[1]

There are two action points here: to alert *MLJ* to the importance of articles in *ReCALL*, and to submit more CALL articles to mainstream journals, articles which include citations of work published in CALL journals.

If we look at the third channel of research dissemination, namely conferences, we find a similar pattern. Candidates for election to the Executive Board of CALICO, which organises one of the most significant North American conferences, recently recognised in their statements a sense of isolation and the need for mainstream recognition:

> In the future I would like to see CALICO reach out even more to scholars in other fields […] such as cognitive psychology, educational psychology, cultural psychology, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, natural language processing, communications, media studies, intercultural studies, etc. […] Several papers given at CALICO

1 Editor's Note: This has now been remedied.

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> often cite these sources, but having a face-to-face dialogue with someone from those fields at the CALICO conference would help the members gain even greater insights into how to apply multidisciplinary approaches to the CALL data they analyze and to the CALL materials they create.
>
> I would work to […] expand on the policy statement, "Scholarly Activities in Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Development, Pedagogical Innovations, and Research," developed jointly by CALICO, EUROCALL, and IALLT […] so that 1) the work of colleagues in the multidisciplinary field of CALL can be evaluated fairly and objectively; 2) the rewards for their work are commensurate with those of colleagues who teach and conduct research in other fields (CALICO online discussion list, 18 February 2004).

At AAAL in 2003 (to take one instance of a key international conference), there were no plenaries on a CALL topic, one colloquium out of 40 (if we exclude web-based testing), four paper sessions comprising 19 disparate papers, two further unconnected papers, and two posters out of 39: altogether 25 out of 366 sessions, or less than 7% of the conference.

In conference planning too, however, there is some evidence of change: the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics selected CALL as one of the two themes of its May 2004 conference (http://www.aclaal.org).

Yet typically, while specialised CALL conferences attract only CALL specialists, generic language conferences continue to ghettoise CALL into Special Interest Groups (SIGs) or 'strands' of utterly disparate content which can safely be ignored by the mainstream.

Overall, it is difficult to refute the conclusion that in all three domains of professional and research diffusion, CALL is marginalised.

3 Does mainstream integration matter? The international HE context

In the old days, when universities were autonomous institutions teaching local students and serving the education policies of their national government, with adequate and sometimes comfortable resourcing, and when individual academics were expected but often not obliged to undertake research alongside their teaching and could let serendipity and personal interest guide their choice of topics and where (or whether) they submitted articles for publication, perhaps disciplinary marginalisation did not matter. But such days, if they ever existed, have gone.

Higher education (HE) is today part of a globalised market. The United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan want HE included in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and European governments, struggling to hold on to their treasured national institutions and the cultural heritage they represent, will not be able to resist indefinitely. Students and academics are more mobile than ever before, and competition for both is becoming fiercer. Launching the UK Government's International Strategy for Education and Skills in November 2004, the Minister stated that 'the global market for international tertiary education is expected to rise from 2.1 million places in 2003 to 5.8 million by 2010', and that 'the UK needs its share'. The significant correlation between national economic prosperity and rapid expansion of HE, demonstrated

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positively by Ireland and Finland and negatively by France and Germany, is pushing more European countries to adopt the Lisbon 2000 target of 50% of young people in HE. Such expansion requires new funding which cannot be met from general taxation: hence the introduction and inexorable rise in student tuition fees. The combination of higher individual fees, greater student mobility, and the reversal of the historical situation where demand for university places exceeded supply, has accentuated the market character of HE: the student has become the customer. Universities are not institutions but brands.

Within Europe, the Bologna Process, presented by its 40 signatories as a noble cultural undertaking to create a borderless and democratic European Higher Education Area, resembles rather a desperate response to the international marketisation of HE: the purpose of establishing a 'Europe of Knowledge' is 'for the EU to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based *economy* in the world' (http://www.unige.ch/eua/: my emphasis). And national self-interest in attracting fee-paying international students seems certain, as I have argued elsewhere (Coleman 2003a, 2004a, 2004b), to overtake any altruistic implementation of the Bologna Process, leaving the way free for market forces.

4 Responding to marginalisation

In twenty-first century academia, then, it is vital that universities, individuals and disciplines should continually demonstrate their achievements and their value. The six actions advocated by Chesters (1999) to promote CALL remain valid: be aware, ignore dinosaurs, champion champions, infiltrate, organise, seek alliances. The remainder of this article also explores two other approaches. The first builds on experience of QA in research and teaching in the UK, and addresses national and trans-national disciplinary objectives, while the second reflects the author's own position at the Open University and concerns individual and institutional responses. Two significant aspects of the recent changes to the international HE context are the emergence of influential rankings and the new emphasis on quality assurance, and these are considered first.

5 Rankings

The results of the quality assessment process, both in teaching and particularly in research, feed into the university rankings on which depend status, and (often) resources, and (sometimes) even professional survival. National rankings, known in the UK, by analogy with football, as 'league tables', have been available in the US, the UK, Germany and elsewhere for many years. In a recent article, discussing their growing influence and sophistication, I suggested that 'the global version is not far away' (Coleman, 2004c: 160). It has now arrived. In fact, there are at least two world league tables of universities. Shanghai's Jiao Tong university (http://ed.sjtu.edu.cn/rank/2004/top500list.htm) adopts the following criteria:

- Alumni winning Nobel Prizes or Fields Medals (10%)
- Staff winning Nobel Prizes or Fields Medals (20%, reducing if long ago)
- Highly cited researchers according to ISI (20%)

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- Articles published in *Science* and *Nature* (20%, spread across other categories for institutions with other specialisms)
- Articles in Science Citation Index and Social Science Citation Index (20%)
- Weighting for size: above measures divided by number of staff (10%)

The SJTU site also lists ten national rankings and scores of related links. The more recent attempt to produce World University Rankings was commissioned by the *Times Higher* and published in November 2004 (http://www.thes.co.uk/worldrankings/). It explicitly recognises – without being inhibited by – the difficulty of international comparisons. The criteria are:

- Peer judgment on specialist domains by 1,300 academics in 88 countries (50%)
- Research impact: citations per academic, based on Thomson ISI (20%)
- Staff : student ratio (20%)
- Percentage of international students (5%)
- Percentage of international academic staff (5%).

Both rankings depend heavily on citation indices. Historically, these have been US-based, and more comprehensive in science than in education or humanities, so scientifically oriented Higher Education institutions (HEIs) do better. This distortion is accentuated by reliance on journal publications, and especially by reference to *Science* and *Nature*. The skew in favour of English-language publications is also clear and acknowledged: 'English language is a powerful aid to academic excellence' (*Times Higher*, 2004: 8). Other criteria are equally open to criticism: the judgment of only a couple of thousand anonymous academics cannot be reliable across all disciplines; some countries have only recently begin to recruit internationally; and as for Nobel prizes…

But if it is not hard to criticise such crude attempts to reduce a key life experience to a few easily quantified measures, it is equally hard to ignore them. With globalization and the marketization of higher education, all stakeholders (parents, governments, research funding bodies, appointment committees, international students, etc.) will look to increasingly refined rankings such as these. Individual academics, and whole discipline domains such as computer-assisted language learning, will henceforth need not only to publish quality articles, but also to take into account where they publish and in what language.

Research status and teaching status are crucial criteria in the competitive market of globalised HE. Status drives university rankings, student choice, and resources. CALL as a discipline cannot afford to remain marginalised.

6 Teaching quality assurance/assessment and the dissemination of good practices

Thanks to Margaret Thatcher's insistence on transparency and accountability in all public domains other than government, the United Kingdom has a longer history of Quality Assurance of research and of teaching in Higher Education than anywhere else in Europe. In addition to its over-arching role in the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency (qaa.ac.uk) already provides advice on a global scale, and directly audits links with UK partner institutions (94 in 24 countries since 1998). The QAA is politically active,

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describing itself in its Strategic Plan 2003–05 as 'a leading player on the European and international quality assurance scene', and an influential member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (www.inqaahe.org) and the European Network for Quality Assurance (www.enqa.net). The latter is closely linked to the Bologna Process, of which QA is one of the keystones (EUA 2003). Europe – and perhaps EUROCALL's wider membership – might learn from UK experience of measures designed to evaluate and enhance the student learning experience.

The UK has indeed had a succession of government-funded programmes to promote good materials and good teaching practice, many directly related to CALL. The Computers in Teaching Initiative (CTI) of 1984–2000 (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/cti/) was followed by TLTP (Teaching and Learning Technology Programme), a major initiative in three phases spanning 1992–2000 (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/tltp/), which, at least by language teaching standards, received huge funding (£45m across all subjects) and produced lots of good software, with the support of the CTI centre at Hull; but proportionately, according to evaluations by Coopers and Lybrand in 1996 and Graham Gibbs in 1999, it had very little impact, because there was no incentive for others to use the products, because of the 'not-invented-here' syndrome, because programs were not sufficiently adaptable to different institutional contexts, different teaching and learning styles; and above all because dissemination was not built into projects from the start.

Following nationwide Quality Assessment of Modern Languages (1995–96), the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) backed ten language projects (1997–2001) with £2.5m and a brief to spread best practice and address shortcomings. A systematic analysis was later conducted of their impact and the problems encountered (Coleman 2001). Problems included

- uneven coverage of sub-disciplines, with duplication in some areas and no projects in others
- competition for time and attention from the Research Assessment Exercise: now that research assessment dominates academic life, teaching has been downgraded to a lower-status activity, and professional development is rarely prioritised by individuals, departments or institutions
- the three-year 'project' approach – time limited, so creating problems of staff recruitment and retention, with loss of expertise, outcomes and continuity on completion
- coinciding with the onset of a massive crisis in recruitment to language degrees, which has worsened since (Coleman 2004c).

Effective approaches included

- a national team to support, advise, monitor and evaluate projects
- initial national survey to raise awareness, multiple data sources including staff and students
- dissemination not bolted on but integrated from the start so that multiple institutions are involved in development – addresses the 'not-invented-here' syndrome
- plural good practices – matched to different institutional contexts

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- identifying, developing and promoting good practices simultaneously
- consortium of institutions not a single HEI
- all projects shared a single contact point, common website, visual identity, annual conference
- multiple approaches to dialogue and dissemination:
  - passive – websites, reports, newsletters, posters, leaflets, packs, videos, CD-ROMs
  - reactive – competitions, online help, conferences and workshop presentations, online treasure hunt, searchable databases
  - semi-active – research publications, press, subject associations,
  - active – institutional visits, conferences and workshops, online discussion lists, accredited staff development, case studies.

Since FDTL, the project approach has been abandoned in favour of an ongoing programme, TQEF (Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund), with three strands:

- Individual National Teaching Fellows
- Mandatory institutional strategies
- Discipline-based Subject Centres, now integrated with the professional Higher Education Academy, of which Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk) is one of the most active and successful.

Thus, models now exist for effective assessment and dissemination of innovative and enhanced teaching activities. It is up to associations such as EUROCALL to undertake proselytising actions, and to exhort national and European bodies responsible for HE administration to support them.

7 Research impact

The UK, like most countries, used to allocate funding to universities according to a formula linked to student numbers. It was up to individual institutions to allocate resources to research, teaching and administration. But since 1986, Research Assessment Exercises have been held, and now £1bn a year, i.e. all research funding other than that allocated by the Research Councils, depends on this periodic external peer evaluation, with the most recent RAE in 2001 (http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/), and the next in 2008 (http://www.rae.ac.uk/). Coleman (2004d) contains a historical summary for language researchers. UK experience demonstrates that it is vital for research communities to become involved with such national processes at the earliest stage, and not to allow other interest groups to build a system which might later disadvantage CALL researchers.

The UK RAE, following repeated refinement, has many positive aspects: transparent assessment criteria, measures of quality and not quantity, peer evaluation, a reasonable timescale and so on, but is nonetheless highly political. In 2001, there were 69 subject panels including European Studies, Celtic Studies, English Language and Literature, French, German Dutch and Scandinavian Languages, Italian, Russian Slavonic and East European Languages, Iberian and Latin American Languages, Linguistics, and

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Education. Only retrospectively did it become apparent which was the most appropriate panel to whom to submit language learning (including CALL) research: for some, choosing the wrong target panel was a costly error.

Following consultation, RAE 2008 will see 15 main panels and 67 sub-panels. In the original proposal, Linguistics and English Language and Literature were under a separate main panel from European Languages; submissions from subject associations (lobbying) means they will now be in the same panel – although Education is in another and European Studies yet another, and sustained pressure failed to achieve the introduction of an *Applied* Linguistics panel. Representation of research domains such as CALL can, however, be enhanced by a coherent approach to nomination of panel members, involving liaison among subject associations.

The UK's Research Assessment Exercise has already been recognised by EUROCALL (Davies, 2001: 19–20) as a significant indicator. Once again, a course of action exists for bodies such as EUROCALL which hope to promote their domain of specialist activity.

8 Local responses to marginalisation: institutional and individual activities

Although the Open University's Department of Languages is probably among the largest in Europe with around 8,000 students each year, it possessed until recently a low research profile, since academics had neither time, resources nor encouragement to conduct research. Those that had established a reputation had done so in their own time and against huge pressures of course creation and development. I was appointed as Professor in 2001 to develop and implement a research strategy. The path was smoothed by the presence of enthusiastic, able and hard-working colleagues, but the need to make a research impact meant thinking about the relationship to language learning in general of CALL and CMC, with which much – but not all – Open University language research is concerned. Actions we have implemented concern both conferences and publications.

Conference attendance is essential for networking, for acquiring a sense of the scope of a discipline and its sub-domains, for rapidly developing a critical sense of current theories, methods and findings. The process of submitting an abstract and giving a conference paper is also an essential prerequisite to publication. We have therefore devoted substantial resources to sending colleagues to conferences. The *quid pro quo* is that each attender has to file a report on return: in this way, all members of our Independent and Technology-Enhanced Learning of Languages and Cultures (INTELLECT) Research Group builds up a picture of which conferences are key, which are marginal, and what is the scope of each.

There are the conferences with a specific CALL focus: EUROCALL, WorldCALL, CALL, IALLT, JALTCALL, Untélé, CALICO, APACALL. There are broader SLA conferences: AILA every three years, but also national equivalents in AAAL, BAAL, CAAL etc. There are conferences for practitioners but with a research component: CercleS, ELC, Association for Language Learning (Language World). There are language testing conferences (EALTA, ACROLT, LTRC). There are conferences by individual language, both international (TESOL, IATEFL) and national (Society for French Studies, Association of University Teachers of German, AFLS in the UK): these can be traditional, even literary, but may still be necessary to build up a profile. New initiatives

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mean new conferences: the Independent Learning Association Oceania held a conference in Melbourne in 2003, with a second due in Auckland in 2005; The Open University held its Independent Language Learning conference in Milton Keynes in 2003, with a focus deliberately broader than CALL/CMC/distance learning, in order to showcase our own research while embedding it in a wider context and bringing CALL research into the active awareness of specialists in domains such as autonomy and assessment.

Outside language teaching and learning, there are conferences on education (BERA and AERA – British/American Educational Research Association, EARLI – European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction) and explicitly on higher education or on distance education (EADTU, EDEN). There are also many conferences on technology, the human-computer interface, and technology in education (ALT-C). The full list at http://www.baal.org.uk/conf_diary.htm shows the huge range on offer. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that we have perfected a strategic approach to conferences, but such a group approach should include targeting a spread of conferences each year, as well as organising symposia at major conferences and being elected to committees and academic selection panels (*comités scientifiques*).

The message once again is that while bodies and conferences such as EUROCALL and CALL have an invaluable function, it is also necessary to take the research out of the mill-race into the mainstream. We cannot continue to allow generalists to ignore CALL, or to pigeonhole it as a domain for specialists, techies or cranks.

As for conferences, so too with journals. One of our development activities has been to profile collectively a large number of research and professional journals, identifying their coverage, preferred approach (theoretical, experimental, technical?) and relative status. There are journals which specialise in CALL and CMC research (*Language Learning and Technology, Computer Assisted Language Learning, ReCALL, ALSIC, CALL-EJ, CALICO Journal*). There are those with broader coverage but which include a proportion of CALL articles, such as *System*. And there are those with a much wider remit, especially in SLA, which include *Modern Language Journal, Applied Linguistics, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, Canadian Modern Language Review, Foreign Language Annals, International Journal of Applied Linguistics, IRAL, Language Learning, Language Teaching Research, Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée, Second Language Research, Language Awareness*. In education, we have inter alia *International Journal of Educational Research, Educational Research, Journal of Educational Research, Evaluation and Research in Education, British Journal of Educational Research, Instructional Science*, and specifically in higher education *Active Learning in Higher Education, Journal of Further and Higher Education, Quality Assurance in Education, Studies in Higher Education, Teaching in Higher Education*. In technology and education there are *British Journal of Educational Technology, ALT-J, Journal of Research on Technology in Education*. In distance learning, *Open Learning, Distance Education, International Review of Research in Open and Distance Education*. By language discipline we can identify *ELTJ, TESOL Journal, TESOL Quarterly, Journal of French Language Studies, Cahiers de l'APLIUT, Deutsch als Fremdsprache, GFL* and so on: none of these lists claims to be exhaustive.

Individually and together, research teams need to familiarise themselves with what the journal seeks and then match their article to the journal, rather than the other way round.

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Achieving publication in a spread of journals matters for two reasons: firstly for the question of profile, of no longer allowing CALL to be ignored or marginalised, and secondly because of the growing importance of Research Assessment.

For this second reason, it is crucial to recognise that there is a hierarchy among journals. This is partly an implicit and hidden process – journal A has a more rigorous peer assessment process than journal B, and insiders know which is the 'best' journal in which to be published.

But it is also partly quantitative: the number of times articles from journal A are quoted in other published articles is a measure of the influence of Journal A, and this can be compared with Journal B. Such citation indices are universal in science, but also widely available in education – they include *Journal Citation Reports, the British Education Index* and *ERIC*, which give an impact factor for each journal. We have seen above the importance of citation indices for university rankings as well as for Research Assessment.

It is worth noting that in terms of status, publishing articles in international journals is more important than book chapters, which in turn are more important than conference proceedings. The degree of external peer review (refereeing) is paramount: no status attaches to publications which include everything submitted to them.

Book publishers also have a hierarchy, with Cambridge and Oxford University Presses at the head in the UK. Internal publications, or publishing with a commercial publisher linked to the University, are still very widespread in many parts of Europe, but may be regarded simply as vanity publishing. Publishers most closely associated with ICT may not be the best place to publish such a book. While the best and most thorough assessment will look at the *quality* of individual publications wherever they appear, it is quicker and cheaper simply to look at *where* a study was published.

Regrettably, it is essential to publish in English. The dominance of English-language and especially North American journals, the dominance of EFL in language teaching research, and the location of most citation indices in the US mean that English-medium journals will always find most favour. Some well-known researchers do not even read another language. But I would advise researchers *also* to publish in other languages: it is important not to let people think that English is enough, and the author achieves two publications for the price of one, national as well as international recognition.

9 Local responses to marginalisation: research design

The most cited research studies, those with the longest shelf-life, are those whose findings have greatest generalisability and theoretical implications. In CALL it is particularly important to design a research project with broad, lasting impact in mind, avoiding as many limiting factors in hardware, software, context, language, theory and method as possible.

Hubbard (2004) has recently drawn attention to limitations in CALL methodology. A balance needs to be found between the attractive methodological simplicity but questionable validity of discourse/conversational analysis of online interactions, and the undoubted need but methodological complexity of studies of blended learning.

It is a cliché that technology changes, and that the rate of technological change is

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accelerating: 'What is new today is old hat six months later' (Davies, 2001: 13, cf. Levy, 1997: xi). Technological evolution is marked by five inter-related forms of change:

- Ephemerality: one model, brand or program replaces another
- Convergence: previously separate pieces of equipment are merged
- Democratisation: expensive, specialist equipment turns into a popular consumer product
- Mobility: fixed installations become portable
- Capacity: increased speed and power in data recording, storage, transmission and processing permit new affordances.

Previously sharp distinctions, such as online and offline, become blurred. Synchronous and asynchronous modes increasingly overlap, as time-shifting makes radio and television asynchronous, answering machines and mechanised call-centre queuing make the telephone asynchronous, and the rapid turn-taking of written CMC in chatrooms and instant messaging is often treated as synchronous.

Social mores are changing in tandem with technological innovation. This means that educators need to engage with different learner communication habits than those of ten or even two years ago. Thanks to the ubiquitous mobile phone, the proportion of audio-only communications is today higher than in the recent past. The transfer from hand-written letter to email may have increased written communication, but has forever changed the nature, length, formality and permanence of the written message.

It also means that the object of language learning, the target language, always of course a moving target, is evolving faster than ever. If the lexical changes, in the form of borrowings from English and new technological coinages, can be quite readily encompassed by an online dictionary, pragmatic developments are harder to circumscribe.

Technology has altered the very nature of discourse. The bimodal division into written and spoken modes was no doubt always artificial, with literary dialogue and radio news broadcasts just two instances of long-established hybrid modality. But today the multimodality which characterises face-to-face interaction is now increasingly available in CMC, and all the evidence suggests that consumers (our students) will embrace it: the rapid spread of mobile phones with inbuilt cameras; the discomfort many learners feel with language laboratories and audio tapes; the way in which blogs (weblogs), while still a mystery to many members of the public, have already moved from text-only to incorporating pictures and now video.

Spoken and written genres are unstable. Academic discourse, one of the most studied genres, has been transformed in less than two decades. In lectures, where visual support was the exception less than a generation ago, its absence is now surprising, and its multimodal character increasingly sophisticated. Academic publication is no longer restricted to linear, black-and-white text.

Indeed, the very relationship between speech, writing, and other forms of visual communication is inexorably changing. Websites favour pictures and short text: the paragraph, along with much of the punctuation which accompanied the introduction of the printed book, no longer holds sway. Whatever cultural status writing has acquired in the few millennia since its invention, the original purpose of overcoming the temporality and spatiality of speech is now accomplished more adequately by other means. Without

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necessarily sharing the view of Graddol (2004) that text-only communication is on its way out, we might perhaps be cautious of investing too much research capital in written CMC.

Finally, it is a fact that the theories underpinning language learning research are also transitory. The 1990s were dominated by universal paradigms and a cognitive model of SLA. Today the fascination of individual learner differences is reasserted, socio-cultural and constructivist models of learning are foregrounded, and the metaphor of the human brain as a unitary supercomputer with 'online processing capacity' is seen as facile and simplistic. A psycholinguistic, cognitive model may be considered inadequate without matching consideration of the learning context (Collentine & Freed, 2004, cf. Mitchell & Myles, 1998) – but a good deal of work remains to be done even to add CALL to face-to-face, domestic immersion and study abroad in language learning context research.

There will of course be factors which constrain research design. In addition to problems of availability of subjects, software, time and other resources, limitations inevitably apply: it is, for example, impossible to assume that findings obtained using one platform will transfer to another. Nor is it easy to predict developments in areas where the industry itself so often miscalculates. Nevertheless, those studies with the longest shelf-life and widest generalisability will be those which contribute most to raising the profile of CALL research.

It is by adopting strategies such as those outlined above, by minimising ephemerality and maximising generality, that CALL research and practice can move in from the margins towards the centre of language learning and teaching. The millpond may be deceptively calm, and the mill-race may offer an exciting ride, but CALL belongs in the mainstream.

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