Book review

Review of *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Diversity in Research and Practice* edited by Glenn Stockwell, Cambridge University Press, 2012, ISBN: 9781107016347. 228 pages.

The edited volume, *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Diversity in Research and Practice*, offers a unique and informative look at diversity in language learning instruction and research. From diversity in the range of technology to diverse contexts to diversity of learners, this edited volume aims to reach a wide range of audiences including researchers, educators, and graduate students.

Each chapter in the book points to the diversity of CALL and serves as a strong reminder that technology use alone is not an effective tool for language instruction. To help instructors reflect more on theoretically sound technology use into their teaching, *Diversity in Research and Practice* presents ten chapters (including an introduction and conclusion) that focus on various aspects of diversity in CALL. There is also a useful list of abbreviations at the beginning of the book and a list of websites and glossary at the end. The organization of the chapters provides readers with insights that further their understanding of diversity in the context of CALL and how it can help move foreign/second language instruction in innovative and pedagogically sound directions.

In Chapter 1 (the Introduction) the book's editor, Glenn Stockwell, gives an up-to-date overview of current technology use both in and out of the classroom. He discusses diversity in terms of its potential to alter the way in which CALL is viewed in that it "may include diversity in the technologies, diversities in the environments in which CALL is used, diversity in the pedagogies employed, diversity in the users of CALL, and diversity in the methods used to research and further our understanding of CALL" (p. 1).

Robert Fischer, in Chapter 2, looks at what students do when using CALL and the diversity of strategies and usage patterns that emerge from tracking data. He highlights the importance of tracking data, which can provide direct observation of what students do in various CALL environments. After providing an overview of the

research, Fischer presents multiple examples that reflect the diversity of student usage patterns, which often differ greatly from the original intent of the tool, as stipulated by the producer. He also suggests that the variability of student usage is very individualistic. He concludes by offering several implications which include, among others, a call for learner training.

The third chapter delves into diversity as it comes into play in teacher training in CALL. Philip Hubbard and Kenneth Romeo present a strong theoretical account of learner diversity and make a case for examining diversity as part of the training process and for those undergoing the training. They argue for a three part framework including technical, strategic, and pedagogical training (based on Romeo & Hubbard, 2010). They also point to other aspects of diversity that are important considerations, such as timing of training, the form, and the intensity of the training. Further, they examine variables for evaluating learner diversity such as motivation, age, learning style, and so forth. In conclusion, they discuss an example of diversity in an ESL class at Stanford University that was built around online audio and video materials. Three types of learner training were integrated in the course. They suggest that learner training is indeed worthwhile and sound a call for more solid research in this area.

Chapter 4 offers insights on diversity in learner support, resources, and systems that facilitate learning out of the classroom. Hayo Reinders and Pornapit Darasawang begin by presenting an overview of how CALL can be used for language support out of the classroom. Next, they examine the idea of learner autonomy and self-access to learning, including various features for implementing language support such as access, storage, sharing and the like. They also provide an example of an online language support program that was developed at a university in Thailand in order to address the features mentioned above. They claim that this program encourages students' learning outside of the classroom as well as their ability to self-direct their own learning. They conclude by suggesting several guidelines for teachers as they explore and implement online language support programs.

In Chapter 5, Glenn Stockwell and Nobue Tanaka-Ellis consider diversity as it relates to environments, such as face-to-face environments, blended environments, distance environments, and virtual environments. They begin by presenting a critical look at these environments that are supported by recent research and studies as they work toward definitions to clarify each type. An example is then provided based on interaction between language learners in an Australian high school and native speakers in a high school in Japan using an online discussion forum or online bulletin boards. Tasks were theoretically based and activated prior knowledge (Skourtou, 2002). Findings from this project suggest that while technology brings various affordances, the environment seems to determine the degree to which these technological affordances are applicable. They conclude by stating that "Regardless of the type of environment in which CALL is used, however, there are certain principles that must be kept in mind, which relate to the importance of knowing the technology, the learners, and the educational goals, and finding a balance between these with regard to the constraints of the particular environment" (p. 89).

As diversity continues to remain the focus of this edited book, Chapter 6 looks at yet another aspect of diversity — that of content. E. Marcia Johnson and John Brine

examine open educational resources (OER) as well as open source software (OSS) and how they can bring innovative approaches to content organization, presentation, and use within teaching environments. The authors first address four developments that relate to diversity in content. They offer definitions and discuss each critically. They include developments such as e-learning, open source software, open educational resources and open license agreements. They provide an example of OSS tools and the use of OER in New Zealand and Japan. They conclude that for OER and OSS to transform language teaching, practice needs to go hand in hand with a shift in thinking about what could potentially be done through technology and is achievable within local contexts and constraints.

In Chapter 7 Marie-Noelle Lamy engages readers to consider aspects of diversity in modalities. She begins by critically examining the notion of modality and how it is has been defined (or its lack of definition) in recent literature. Modality, she claims, is made up of material tools, modes, and language learning objectives. Next she summarizes four studies that use fora, chats, MOOs, and multimodal platforms to better observe modality relationships at work. She concludes that there are many dimensions at work in these projects and offers a framework to help increase the visibility of modalities to researchers. The framework includes materiality, the impact of both design, production, and dissemination on meaning-making, the impact of the screen, and perpetual spaces on meaning making.

Chapter 8 addresses diversity in technologies, and highlights current trends including innovative and emerging technologies. Gordon Bateson and Paul Daniels begin by discussing four categories of technologies: multi-server technologies (searching, social networking, gaming, for example), single-server technologies (content/learning management systems, for example), single personal computer technologies (file editing, quiz management, screen editor, for example), and mobile technologies (podcasts, mobile apps), providing examples of service, websites and products for each. Three example projects are provided of multi-server and single-server technologies in blended learning at a university in Japan with first year students. When determining the type of technology to use, they suggest considering a variety of variables such as learner and instructor accessibility, ease of use of application, platform dependencies, and financial constraints, as well as expertise and support.

In Chapter 9 Glenn Stockwell looks at diversity in research and practice and technology in a set of studies collected over a 10-year period (2001–2010). He specifically examines how practice is framed, analyzed and presented in CALL research and covers various approaches to research, including the using of a new or existing technology for its applicability to language learning, examining the characteristics of new or existing technologies, developing software or hardware for language learning purposes, identifying a problem in practice and finding a solution using technology, building upon previous research, meta-analyses, and discussions about culture, research paradigms, and theories. Stockwell then provides three examples that offer a glimpse as to how research and practice can be approached. He concludes by stating that ''Well-conceived research can bring forth important developments in practice, and being aware of the interplay between research and practice in CALL can lay the foundations for the continued development and refinement of both'' (p. 163).

In the final chapter or conclusion, Glenn Stockwell reminds readers that the chapters in the volume illustrate the extent to which diversity exists in both research and practice in CALL and he calls for a fuller understanding of the issues that impact the implementation of technologies in language learning. In reflecting on the chapters, he proposes that there are three levels of diversity that extend beyond a course: individual (learner background, classroom dynamics, etc.), institutional (policy and curriculum, financial support, etc.) and societal (availability, standards, etc.). He points out that the levels are not independent of each other; rather, each shapes and/or is shaped by the other levels. He concludes that CALL is now more diverse than it has been in the past and encourages readers' continued embracing of diversity to keep moving the research forward in this area.

To conclude, *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Diversity in Research and Practice* is a valuable addition to any foreign language or second language instructor's collection. The overview and outline of diversity offered in the introduction is concise and informative. Seasoned instructors will be brought up-to-date on current research, and new, or pre-service, instructors will benefit from highlights of examples of diversity in action in various part of the world. In addition, the book encourages instructors who have not yet embraced diversity in their teaching to consider various resources and ideas. The volume also offers educators approaches to technology that are solidly grounded in current pedagogy, practice, and research. Stockwell has gathered a variety of seasoned contributors who have worked extensively with technology and who are able to discuss it critically. One minor weakness is that chapters do not include thought provoking questions, case studies or other pedagogical materials that would allow for easy implementation as a textbook in a graduate seminar. In sum, Stockwell's edited book sounds a call to diversity in CALL and to the various ways in which it can be incorporated; it is a solid, comprehensible resource.

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References

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