Preface

INTRODUCTION TO CALL THEORY AND ONLINE TESOL PEDAGOGY

By 2019, roughly half of all college courses will be delivered online. This statement reflects an important interpretation of the changing delivery options for education as described in recent research in higher education (Selingo, 2015). How will TESOL educators be trained and prepare themselves to meet this demand? What theories will guide global TESOL educators to maintain principled teaching practice? What academic disciplines offer suitable theories to support our developing interpretations, planning, implementation, and evaluation of successful use of technology for English as a second language pedagogy? What specific skills, knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions are needed to meet this online teaching demand in ESL and EFL contexts? Selingo (2015) surveyed approximately 400 presidents at four-year colleges regarding their attitudes concerning financial sustainability, college rankings, and student outcomes. One key finding from the survey is that one of the top two strategies college presidents are using to generate revenue is through offering online courses to their students (Selingo, 2015, p. 11). In this Chronicle of Higher Education Special Presidents’ Report, the rapidly changing reality of online pedagogy in American higher education is startling.

This growing demand implies a sense of urgency specifically for online TESOL teacher training, and by extension, necessitates contributing to the discussion of what theories to utilize to better meet these pedagogical demands. Given that the difficulties inherent in implementing TESOL teacher training with CALL have been well documented (Kessler, 2006, 2007; Healey et al., 2011; Hubbard, 2008) and specifically the challenges with online TESOL teacher training as well as teaching for online English learning (England, 2012, Kouritzin, 2002; Norton & Nunan, 2002; Pawan, Wiechart, Warren, & Park, 2016), how is this training to be conducted efficiently? How can CALL theory reinforce the teacher training process and provide guidance for quality training and instruction for this demand placed on the profession? Part of this discussion acknowledges that a definition of CALL theory is needed since CALL in ESL and EFL environments is one component in an applied field. CALL theory, according to Hubbard (2008), is:

The set of perspectives, models, frameworks, and specific theories that offer generalizations to account for phenomena related to the use of computers in all their forms in the pursuit of language learning and teaching objectives, to ground relevant research agendas, and to inform effective CALL practice. (p. 2)

One aim of this edited collection is to add to the expanding conversation about how CALL and CALL theory are developing even though disagreement is expressed concerning whether CALL theory
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is needed (Egbert & Hanson Smith, 2007; Hubbard, 2016). Part of this focus was learning more about interdisciplinary conceptual combinations that shed light on the complex and dynamic intersection of online TESOL pedagogy and CALL theory application and development.

The terms, practices, and principles associated with online learning have developed over its history, with practitioners and scholars offering multiple ways in which to define and interpret this facet of the educational field (Goertler, 2011). For example, blended learning, due in part to its popularity with students and administrators alike, appears to be in a position of permanence and is likely to increase in demand (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Goertler, 2011). The benefits of online teaching and learning for the provider and the recipient confirm an equality of focus for both a specified institutional convenience and for learning (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Goertler, 2011). Nevertheless, it is also documented that lack of information, training, and experience with online education has led to frustration among both learners and teachers (Allen, Seaman, & Garrett, 2007).

In response to a systematic review of online TESOL pedagogy, the successes and challenges of online language teaching programs have been documented for at least two decades (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999; England, 2012; Kouritzin, 2002; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Norton & Nunan, 2002; Pawan, et al., 2016). Some of this research centers on the development of ESL programs delivered fully online or in a particular configuration of blended learning (Banados, 2006). Equally relevant is the argument that “certain elements take on added importance” for online teaching and learning, which is based on TESOL technology standards (Healey et al., 2011, p. 163). Within this framework, the following areas are prioritized for online instruction: technology infrastructure, appropriate learning environment, time management, and participant presence.

**HOW DOES THE CALL LITERATURE ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF ONLINE TESOL PEDAGOGY?**

Current online TESOL pedagogy research is expanding with a variety of contributions focusing on topics such as teacher training (Douglas & Paton, 2013; England, 2012; Pawan et al., 2016; Peachey, 2013), general English learning (Bilgin, 2013), and English for Specific Purposes (Kern, 2013; Whittaker, 2013). These scholarly resources reflect a growing body of research in CALL and TESOL that integrate context-specific solutions to online ESL and EFL pedagogy constraints as well as answering key questions about TESOL teacher training which incorporate technology. Several example publications with a focus on second language education serve as a useful backdrop to explain where the current book is situated and how it provides intersecting interpretations.

The text, “TESOL Technology Standards: Description, Implementation, Integration,” (Healey et al., 2011), was one of the first publications on the market to focus exclusively on technology standards in the field of TESOL directed to both learners and teachers. The authors provide a solid description of the contexts in which the technology standards have been developed, but leaves room for specific guidance that practicing online TESOL educators can use regarding real-world pedagogical challenges and effective classroom procedures. Nicolson, Murphy, and Southgate (2011) offer a comprehensive overview of the key issues with blended instruction and developmental issues that may arise for teachers. Their text examines the impact of different learning environments (such as online, face-to-face, and telephone) on pedagogic practice and language learner support, and recognizes the particular sociocultural, psycholinguistic, and cognitive issues that must be taken into account when working with diverse adult language
learners in blended settings. Although some of the research presented from this text informs practice in the CALL field, an increased emphasis on systematic and rigorous empiricism would strengthen our understanding of this area. Similarly, Sharma and Barrett (2007) provide language teachers with a practical overview of the technology available at the time, but does not focus specifically on ESL-related issues with online and blended pedagogy. More directly related to CALL theory application is the work of Arnold and Ducate (2011), which provides a collection of interpretations of CALL theory and research.

JOINING THE ACADEMIC DISCUSSION IN ONLINE TESOL PEDAGOGY AND RESEARCH

In this section, examples are given to show how the content of the current book overlaps with the expanding online TESOL pedagogy literature. Two recent publications relevant to online TESOL pedagogy are edited collections with a TESOL focus (England, 2012; Pawan et al., 2016). England (2012) advanced the discussion of online TESOL pedagogy and emphasized that an increasing number of employers require ESL/EFL teachers to hold a master’s degree in TESOL with a substantial and growing number of these teachers developing the necessary professionalization through online instruction (England, 2012). One strength of the England (2012) publication is its inclusion of primary research and case studies of various programs, which provides the reader with reports on the ways in which online programming is changing. England also relates the application of theory to online TESOL pedagogy, including sociocultural theory and communities of practice. A second relevant publication about online TESOL pedagogy prioritizes pedagogy over technology in order to determine characteristics of quality online instruction (Pawan et al., 2016). This publication offers relevant interpretations for applying foundational teaching theories to online pedagogy for both language teacher education and language teaching.

The current edited collection extends this dialogue by highlighting practical responses to context-related technology issues. Several chapters in this book develop concrete connections between CALL theory and online instructional challenges that go beyond atheoretical first generation CALL research (Hubbard, 2016), research with “happy” conclusions (Anwaruddin, this volume) and cursory pedagogical implication based on limited to no data collection and analysis (cf. Perren & Wurr, 2015 and teacher testimonial research). In addition, various chapters advance our understanding of key concepts such as teaching presence in online learning (England, 2012; Healey et al., 2011; Johnston & Lawrence, this volume; Olesova & de Oliveira, this volume). Another topic of interest is the promotion of active learning and the connection to flipped learning (Kostka & Marshall, this volume). Third spaces is an additional concept addressed in Pawan et al. (2016) that suggests ways the online medium provides a safe environment and a shared reality for students (see also Romo Smith & Pryzmus, this volume). Assessment is also a topic presented in the current book that continues the refinement of quality testing and evaluation concepts and practices in CALL and online TESOL pedagogy (see chapters by Monfared, et al., and Cho, both in this volume).

It is equally important to note that England (2012) and Pawan et al. (2016) both represent CALL theory (in relation to online pedagogy) progressing along a CALL theory development continuum. This edited collection contains chapters aligning theoretical interpretations of theory borrowing and “more interesting” theory adaptations for accommodating differences inherent in the computer-mediated context (Hubbard, 2016, p. 2). Furthermore, the chapters in the current collection contribute further to the online TESOL pedagogy research with evidence of (1) CALL theory synthesis and theory creation, and
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(2) providing possibilities for exploration of CALL theory instantiation and CALL ensembles (Hubbard, 2009a, 2016; Hubbard & Levy, 2016). This current book strengthens online CALL theory by building on previous scholarship in online TESOL pedagogy and research in order to promote pedagogical best practices. The impetus for this decision stems from that CALL scholarship which argues that instead of researching CALL vs. non-CALL related language learning activities, which has not yielded significant research results (Hubbard, 2016), that a more productive empirical route is to examine online TESOL contexts and settings for their own value, as in the chapter on different uses of YouTube in TESOL (Dinh, this volume). Moreover, with the increased use of and interest in online teaching and CALL in TESOL, this collection offers an array of innovative online CALL projects that respond to, extend, or critique earlier works, and which apply a variety of established and emerging theoretical frameworks to systematic and rigorous data collection and analysis. The goal of this current publication is to contribute to the next generation of online TESOL pedagogy and CALL scholarship.

PURPOSE, AUDIENCE, AND INSPIRATION

This book is intended to inform the reader of international applications of CALL theory and in particular, for online delivery of TESOL related content. This publication also explores the thought processes, guiding theoretical frameworks, and practical steps international scholars have initiated in specific global settings. Another purpose of the current text is to provide an update on rapidly evolving TESOL teacher education issues. We hope that through this book the reader can extract approaches to successfully integrating technology for ESL/EFL learning and for teacher training programs based on pedagogical principles informed by theoretical foundations.

This volume includes chapters that focus on blended learning in a variety of configurations, from fully online contexts to face-to-face learning situations with an online component. Additionally, this collection offers a balance of empirical research projects combined with numerous survey reports on a variety of CALL topics in TESOL. The primary audience for this publication are TESOL educators worldwide, as well as educators in other disciplines and contexts who may have English language learners. Readers are encouraged to explore the book’s content as a point of departure for ways to scrutinize a number of relevant CALL themes.

The inspiration for this current text is the normalized use of technology in language teaching and language teacher education. That is, both increasing our understanding of how to improve our own online instruction and contributing to the academic discussion, were sources of inspiration to the editors. Discovering solutions for training TESOL educators to more effectively address the needs of the growing number of digital native students is based on raising awareness about how quality use of technology is grounded in a sufficient understanding of the skills, history, trends, and standards emanating from CALL research and teacher training for technology (Healey et al., 2011; Hubbard, 2016; Smaldino, Lownther, Mims, & Russell, 2015). Finally, the genesis of this text also came from the five co-editors’ interest in and experience with online delivery of TESOL instructional content. It is our belief that early adopters likely experience a considerable amount of trial and error as they refine their instructional delivery based on planning, implementation, and evaluation. It is also important to point out that technology use in various contexts around the globe will vary considerably depending on in which of the three domains (circles) of Kachru’s Concentric Circles Model the instruction is situated (Kachru, 1992). It was our goal to know more about these features and contexts and to share this knowledge with others.
ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 16 chapters outlined in the section that follows, with a brief overview highlighting salient points of each chapter. We recognize that our arrangement of the chapters is but one of numerous ways in which the collected chapters communicate with each other. We encourage readers to explore alternate readings and arrangements that best suit their individual purposes.

Chapter 1 examines the need for a more theoretically-informed approach to collaborative English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pedagogy and research. The authors discuss the relevance of online collaborative learning and the use of writing tools to sustain virtual learning communities as catalysts for online collaboration.

Chapter 2 compares two dominant theories of technology to a new direction of theory and practice for teaching and learning of English described as Cultural Theory of Technological Mediation. Dominant theoretical approaches in the CALL literature are reviewed followed by discussion of the alternative theory aligned with three pedagogical principles.

Chapter 3 investigates the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Language Learning technologies, tools, and resources for figurative language in general and idiom learning in particular. The chapter provides recommendations for idiomaticity training and teaching, as well as time-tested practices for further theorizing and research.

Chapter 4 connects current second language acquisition theory with CALL-based teaching and classroom practices. The authors indicate that sociocultural and constructivist theories linked to CALL potentially create digital communities of practice while strengthening existing ones.

Chapter 5 introduces a case study of online language teacher education in a TESOL graduate course that draws on sociocultural theories to investigate interaction patterns among participants in online teacher training.

Chapter 6 addresses a variety of YouTube video activities used by teachers in two different contexts: ESL in the USA and EFL in Vietnam. The results demonstrate the similarities and differences in the use of YouTube videos and teacher beliefs concerning the technology.

Chapter 7 discusses the pitfalls and promises of electronic portfolio assessment (EPA) for English language learners in high school classrooms in the United States. The author delineates how EPA was developed to enhance academic and linguistic abilities of adolescent ELLs while embracing their multifaceted and hybrid identities. This chapter also presents both challenges and benefits that teachers and students experienced in the process of implementing EPA.

Chapter 8 attempts to dispel that myth of corpora being too complex for classroom use. The author synthesizes the rich tradition of research in corpora focusing on pedagogical implications and insights. The author then offers workable techniques to implement corpus data in the CALL classroom.

Chapter 9 investigates whether hybrid instruction has a positive effect on the development of students’ knowledge of English grammar and editing skills, as well as whether learners have positive perceptions of the hybrid design. The authors conducted a study with two sections of an English grammar and editing skills class: one hybrid course and the other face-to-face.

Chapter 10 describes the implementation of an online learning management system, Edmodo, and the activities that were used in an EFL class to improve student engagement. The primary influencing factors of student engagement are highlighted by the authors as teacher instructions, Internet connection quality, and specific Edmodo features.
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Chapter 11 situates the current state of teaching and assessing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the University of Bucharest, Romania. The author discusses ways in which technology-integrated teaching methods have begun to shape both the content and the delivery format of the specialized English class and to renew the task-based framework on which the course is developed.

Chapter 12 provides an overview of instructional capabilities of written, oral and audio feedback and how they can support ESL and EFL students in asynchronous online courses. The author discusses when and how to provide different types of feedback for ESL and EFL students enrolled in online courses taught in English.

Chapter 13 offers an overview of flipped learning as an educational approach and its early emergence in TESOL. The authors review and discuss present research on its application to language learning, examining issues, addressing controversies, and offering recommendations for pedagogy.

Chapter 14 reviews the benefits of online video games for promoting L2 acquisition, specifically massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), and presents new research that seeks to explain why and how MMORPGs may be beneficial. The authors indicate that MMORPGs are beneficial to L2 acquisition primarily because they provide opportunities for interaction in the target language through participation in collaborative problem-solving tasks.

Chapter 15 describes the potential impact of CALL theory and practice on the language and identity socialization of transnational children in Mexico when educators imagine and promote interaction beyond the classroom. The authors advocate creating blended affinity spaces at schools for digital role-playing games, discuss game-ecology literacy development, and detail the implementation of such spaces in schools.

Chapter 16 introduces Augmented Reality (AR) technology in learning environments by embracing its potentials and foreseeable hindrances to language education. The authors discuss practical uses for this emerging technology effectively in the classroom and propose issues for future research.

This preface closes with the quote, “Computer assisted language learning (CALL) is both exciting and frustrating as a field of research and practice. It is exciting because it is complex, dynamic and quickly changing – and it is frustrating for the same reasons” (Hubbard, 2009b, p. 1). The aim here is to promote the idea that what is presented in this publication is of little value if not considered in concert with previous and future empiricism examining CALL, CALL theory, and online TESOL pedagogy. Utilizing multiple perspectives for how to guide online TESOL educators to theorize from their CALL practice, and to practice what they CALL theorize (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), will likely be further strengthened by embracing a combination of established CALL foundations with online TESOL pedagogy innovations as they emerge. This will hopefully allow global TESOL educators to devote themselves to the growing demand of online pedagogy indicated earlier in the Chronicle of Higher Education special report (Selingo, 2015) regardless of the complexities. We hope that by reading this book TESOL educators can stay informed of the ‘quick changes’ and replace the potential frustrations of CALL implementation with the confidence and joy of fulfilling their students’ learning needs in technology and with technology.

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REFERENCES


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