Finding Gems in Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Clues from GLoCALL 2011 and 2012 Papers

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ABSTRACT

A large number of papers on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) are presented at international conferences such as the Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (GLoCALL) conference every year. Considering that diverse and innovative ways of using CALL technologies and techniques are reported through the papers, it should be meaningful to have a close look at them in order to see the flow of the development of CALL. This article attempts to explore some emerging trends, issues and topics discussed in the field of CALL by looking at papers presented at the GLoCALL 2011 and GLoCALL 2012 conferences and describing three papers selected for this Special Issue from the two conferences. It serves as an introduction to the Special Issue and an invitation to CALL researchers and practitioners to participate in finding real gems in CALL.

Keywords: Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Globalization, Language Learners, Language Teachers, Localization, Online Tools

INTRODUCTION

The Asia-Pacific Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning (APACALL: http://www.apacall.org/) and the Pacific Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (PacCALL: http://paccall.org/) have jointly organised an annual conference called Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (GLoCALL: http://glocall.org/) since 2007 by combining their resources collaboratively to exchange knowledge and skills for the application of technology to language learning and teaching. The GLoCALL conference aims to share research and experience on how to use computer technology to make language learning effective and to explore how the technology can be adapted to meet the local needs of learners and teachers. It also aims to provide global perspectives on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and to inspire the professional development of local professionals working with CALL.

In line with the aims of the conference, GLoCALL conferences have been held in places where local teachers and researchers show their
interest in CALL and there is a great demand for learning about the use of CALL. There have always been opportunities for international and local presenters to talk about global and local perspectives on CALL at the conferences. This article attempts to explore some trends, issues and topics discussed in the field of CALL by looking at papers presented at the GLoCALL 2011 and GLoCALL 2012 conferences and describing three papers selected for this Special Issue from the two recent conferences. It serves as an introduction to the Special Issue and an invitation to CALL researchers and practitioners to participate in finding real gems in CALL.

GLOBALIZATION AND LOCALIZATION IN CALL

The GLoCALL conference series is held in a different location every year. Table 1 summarises actual sites where GLoCALL conferences were held in the past. In the cases of the first and second GLoCALL conferences, the conferences took the form of a travelling road show with organising committee members, plenary speakers and whoever else wished to give presentations at both locations.

At a GLoCALL conference, it is natural to see a variety of papers discussing issues in local and global contexts and covering both the state of the art themes and practical training components for participants with varying levels of CALL experience. The program of the conference normally includes 80 or more concurrent sessions and 4 plenary sessions over 3 days. It also offers 2-3 workshops on basic aspects of CALL pedagogy scheduled prior to or after the main conference program as a service to the local community. Potential presenters are encouraged to propose papers within the following sub-themes, but are not limited to: the application of technology to the language classroom; localizing Internet materials to the classroom; using the Internet for cultural exchange; managing multimedia/hypermedia environments; e-learning, collaborative learning and blended learning; emerging technologies; fostering autonomous learning through technology; and training language teachers in e-learning environments.

Like papers presented at other GLoCALL conferences, papers presented at the GLoCALL 2011 and GLoCALL 2012 conferences cover a wide range of themes and topics. At the same time, trends and issues emerge and they make the conferences distinctive in the context of language learning. In terms of the target language, English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) dominates in the vast majority of the papers; there were less than a handful of papers on the learning of other languages (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, German, Italian, Spanish) although many studies and projects are easily transferrable to other language learning con-
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