Chapter 3
Establishing a Praxis Between Sociocultural Perspectives and CALL–Based Practices

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ABSTRACT

The field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has grown in terms of second language acquisition (SLA) theory. Researchers have linked sociocultural theories to CALL, noting that technologies can create communities of practice. Although many L2 learners and language teachers are proficient in the use of technology, this does not mean they can use it systematically to learn or teach. The aim of this chapter is to connect current sociocultural perspectives with CALL-based technologies. The first part discusses interactionist and sociocultural theories of SLA and shows how technology can build communities of practice, encourage reflection, and ultimately promote autonomous learning. The second section describes three CALL-based practices: (1) wikis, (2) role-playing games, and (3) online record-keeping. Each description links these practices to sociocultural perspectives of SLA theory and TESOL technology standards (TTS).

INTRODUCTION

In the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), the use of digital technologies to facilitate the teaching and learning of a second language has grown in terms of second language acquisition (SLA) theory development and classroom applications. Researchers have linked sociocultural and constructivist theories to CALL (Dalgarno, 2001; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Youngs, Ducate & Arnold, 2011; Warschauer, 2000), noting that digital technologies have the potential to create communities of practices in the digital realm (Abrams, 2011). This sort of community building and strengthening can be viewed in terms of how people use digital devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches) to run applications that build digital social spaces (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). Although many L2 learners are digital natives and many language teachers are proficient in the everyday use of digital technology (Prensky, 2001), this is by no means a guarantee that both the learners and teachers can use digital tools in a systematic way that creates a *praxis* between theory, teaching, and learning (Healey, et al., 2011).

BACKGROUND

In the field of TESOL, the use of technology for language learning has been guided by the roles of tutor, tool, and medium. From a theoretical perspective, theories of learning and language often color and shape the use of technology in the language classroom. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Salaberry (1996) note, the audio-lingual method relied heavily on audio-visual playback and recording devices, with the language lab playing a central role in the language learning experience. In this learning environment, technology took on the role of tutor, providing both instruction, feedback, and testing (Ducate & Arnold, 2011; Kern, 2006). When the audio-lingual method fell out of favor, so did language labs. As a tool for language learning, technology provides English language learners (ELLs) with information about the target language and culture. An excellent illustration of the role of technology as a tool is data-driven learning, or DDL (O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007). With the help and guidance of an instructor, ELLs can employ corpora such as the Michigan Corpus of Spoken Academic English (MICASE) or Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to examine concordance lines to view how specific node words (i.e., a specific vocabulary item or structure) collocate (i.e., frequently go together) (Lin & Lee, 2015). Finally, technology can play the role of a medium in which ELLs use computer-mediated technology to interact, collaborate, and form identities (Kern, 2006).

In his corpus-based study, Hubbard (2008) examined the words that collocated with the word *theory* in over 244 journal articles in 25 volumes of the *CALICO Journal*. One of the questions Hubbard asked was what specific theories were mentioned. He discovered that 113 distinct theories were mentioned, suggesting that CALL theory is an "amalgam" of theories extended to and adapted for CALL environments (Hubbard, 2008, p. 393). In an early analysis, Kern (2006) noted there are controversies surrounding which theory to apply to CALL. As was found in Hubbard (2008), CALL (not unlike the field of second language acquisition itself) is informed by a hodgepodge of theories and approaches. Ducate and Arnold (2011) identified four approaches to prior CALL research: technological, psycholinguistic, sociocultural, and ecological approaches. For this chapter, we have adopted social and sociocultural perspectives of learning (Zuengler & Miller, 2006) to CALL, while at the same time acknowledging that other perspectives and orientations have their place in CALL. Thus, we focus our attention on the role of technology as a medium for interaction.

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