

Editorial
Integrating CALL into Study Programmes
Selected Papers from EUROCALL 2006

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Like a good deal of change in education, the integration of digital technologies into language teaching and learning has a tendency to be a slow moving, often uncertain, process, whose advance is punctuated by a series of political, administrative and educational filters. These operate at both a global (i.e. international and/or national) and local (i.e. regional and/or institutional) level. Like a train setting off from its departure point travelling towards a final destination – the “normalisation” of CALL perhaps, where computer technology becomes “an integral part of every lesson, like a pen or a book” (Bax 2003: 23) – we all see this process from the unique standpoint of our own institution, though in fact our journey takes place simultaneously within regional, national and international boundaries. Departure and arrival points will inevitably differ: delays may vary, but are to be expected. And although the view from the window, including the stations we stop off at, might look very similar, even identical at times, we will invariably recount different experiences at the end of our journeys – assuming, of course, we ever arrive!

I believe that the train metaphor is a useful one to explain disparity in the integration and implementation of CALL, not least, because reductive overviews of change (i.e. those which package problems/solutions into convenient monolithic syntheses) paint a blurred, impressionistic picture of problems that require the sharp, well-defined edges of the local context from which solutions can be identified. Global problems do not always manifest themselves in the same way as they do in the local context: an axiomatic truism, but one which is central to the problem. So much so, it seems, that this became the primary focus of the *Becta Review 2005*, and, evidently, continued to cause concern in the following year. *The Becta Review 2006: Evidence of the Progress of ICT in Education*, which, in identifying key “issues and barriers in the effective development of technology to support educational processes”, places the “critical variation” of “practitioners, departments and educational institutions” at the top of a ten-point list. This includes “whole-institution change”, “sustainability and affordability”, “supporting continuity of learning”, “learner access and capability”, going on to highlight the fact

that “different circumstances and missions demand differing deployment solutions” (Becta Review 2006: 58). The uniqueness of locality, then, clearly is an important issue. Another significant factor in the process of integration is reflected in the frequent use of the expression “affordability” in successive Becta Reports, confined, as they are to the situation in UK schooling, yet reminding us that on a global canvass financial wherewithal is the *sine qua non* underlying any successful form of ICT integration. Indeed, *The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: The Digital Divide Report* (2005) highlights the “strong correlation between a country’s ICTDI (information and communication technology diffusion index) and its income and level of human development, as measured by the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI)” (2005: xi). And here again, it is important to consider the binary perspective of the global-local context in its entirety; to paint in the detail of the specific locality, which at once stresses the notion that ‘the digital divide’ is a measure that exists *between* as well as *within* national boundaries. Wales (2000), for example, coined the term ‘regionism’ to refer to social, economic and political inequality in England: a north-south divide. These sorts of differences within nation states have been shown to predetermine, amongst other things, educational provision within regions (Harris, 2002).

Yet, however we decide to list, prioritise or otherwise categorise elements of successful CALL integration, in the final analysis, any form of change comes down to how much people are willing to invest in that change. Politicians, administrators and educators all have a role to play in convincing others of the value of technology-supported change: each of us has a central contribution to make in building up a complete picture of what is happening in our daily teaching/learning environments. The very individual, sometimes idiosyncratic, features within a locality are where real change takes place, bringing about the sort of widespread ‘normalisation’ implied in the title of EUROCALL 2006, “Integrating CALL into Study Programmes”. And certainly, the conference held in Granada from 4-7 September 2006, with nearly 200 papers of various descriptions, divided into fourteen strands (plus a Virtual Strand), representing technological initiative from all over the world, is truly an expression of the diversity of individual locality.

My heartfelt thanks to all who played a part in organising the conference - too numerous to mention by name in this short opening piece - especially the Local Organising Committee, who literally worked night and day to bring about an event that one blogger described (if you’ll forgive!) as a “superbly organised conference”.

References

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