

CALL Teacher Quality

—What do we need to prepare for?—

Kazunori Nozawa (Ritsumeikan University)

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Introduction

We can easily envision a 21st century where all students are technology literate and have access to the educational resources of the Information Superhighway. Both national and local governments support universities and schools across the nation by providing funds to invest in educational technology and to integrate it into classroom instruction. Those funds have supported the implementation of educational technology in all universities and schools for the purpose of applying technology to attract applicants, support school reform, acquiring hardware and software to improve student learning, acquiring connections to telecommunications networks to obtain access to resources and services, and on-going professional development in the integration of technology into curriculum. A major factor in how effectively technology can be used by universities and schools is teacher preparedness to use the technology. The presenter will discuss both positive and negative results of a survey on the current state of CALL teacher preparation and qualifications as well as several indicators of teachers' work environments.

Brief Review of Literature

There is already a body of literature that suggests a need exists to incorporate a range of aspects into any CALL training courses. A case study by Rilling (2000) describes a syllabus for Computers in Language Teaching (CLT) elective course at the graduate level in the MATESL program at Northern Arizona University. The CLT course provided participants with hands-on activities designed to explore and develop software and support materials for computer-based learning activities while exploring theoretical issues related to computers in education through traditional and computerized discussion formats. The course content for CLT was divided into roughly six units: (1) Honing computer skills; (2) Reviewing commercially available software; (3) Reviewing software authoring programs and/or producing software; (4) Developing supplemental

activities using the Internet; (5) Developing professional Web pages and understanding their uses; and (6) Designing classroom materials based on corpus linguistic techniques. As with the development of any new course, careful consideration of institutional resources, student needs and interests, and personal strengths should be taken into account.

Amiri (2000) examines some of the issues related to the information technology (IT) training of the language teachers in MA TEFL/TESOL courses and argues that teachers at this level should be trained not merely as consumers but as both consumers and producers of computer-based materials. The article focuses on the role of computer programming in MA courses and concludes that knowledge of programming is important for enabling teachers to get involved in the design and development of computer-based materials and should be included as a part of the IT training for language teachers.

Carr et al. (1998) reports that programs preparing pre-service teachers to use technology must focus on curriculum, student-centered pedagogy, and field-based learning because technology gives them the potential to change education. Zeon et al. (2001) reports the development of a model program based on this approach at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

The International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) released national standards and recommendations for colleges to consider in preparing teachers to use technology effectively in their instruction in July 2000. The six standards areas with performance indicators were designed to be general enough to be customized to fit academic institutions guidelines and yet specific enough to define the scope of the topic. They simply describe what beginning teachers should know and be able to do with technology. Those skills include using technology in developing curricula, assessing students, and increasing professional knowledge. (See more at <http://cnets.iste.org/teachstand.html>.)

Regarding using the Internet in language teaching, Warschauer and Whittaker (1997) recommend five basic guidelines for CALL teachers to consider in successfully planning and implementing network-based learning projects, these being carefully planned goals, integration into the classroom, a number of complexities, necessary support, and involvement of students in decisions. These are essential conditions which must be considered when training CALL teachers in the preparation courses.

Survey Results in 2002 Academic Year

There were 25 full-time and part-time CALL teachers in the 1st semester (English 4 and English 12) and 13 in the 2nd semester (English 8) who taught CALL classes as part of the English program for two colleges (College of Economics and College of Business Administration) at Ritsumeikan University. Bilingual (Japanese and English) questionnaires were administered online to the CALL teachers in July 2002 and in January 2003. The purpose of the questionnaires was mainly to determine teachers' opinions for the contents and learning/teaching styles of the Web-

based program and for further improvement of the program, and as such, the given questionnaires were not directly related to their qualifications. Due to the voluntary nature of the questionnaire, only 3 (12%) of 25 CALL teachers for English 4 and English 12 in the 1st semester and 2 (15.39%) of 13 CALL teachers for English 8 in the 2nd semester completed the survey. Due to this fact, the survey results themselves have both quantitative and quality problems, and accordingly only a very limited summary is given here:

- (1) Almost all of the teachers were neither formally trained in CALL nor did professional research on CALL so that they taught as a part of their teaching duties in the undergraduate English program.
- (2) Almost all of the CALL teachers were familiar with the current learner-centered and Web-based CALL programs which started in 1998 (with minor changes and improvements occurring each year), although there were some new part-timers who still lacked sufficient knowledge and skills in CALL;
- (3) Some of the teachers didn't use the more complicated software in their classes, despite participating in pre-semester CALL workshops. For example, one of the teachers in English 8 mentioned that she could not handle *Adobe GoLive* to create Web pages as a collaborative small-group learning so she used *Netscape Composer* instead);
- (4) Some of the native English teachers did not follow the online manuals and recommended tasks for the subjects they taught. As a result, some students received differential learning opportunities to acquire basic knowledge and skills using computers and network communication.
- (5) In addition to the teachers' mailing list discussion and information exchanges, some additional tutoring sessions were given to less CALL literate teachers even after the semester started and tried to build their confidence in handling software and other matters.

The demand for on-the-job training has been tremendous for the CALL facilitators partially because of the lack of both quantitative and qualitative training in the preparation of courses and also partially because of rapid advancements in technology. However, such requests are considered quite reasonable for the development of CALL and the betterment of the learning environment.

Conclusion

Hanson-Smith (1997) states that the uses of technology imply a heavy investment in teacher training and until a whole new generation of technology-literate students graduate and become teachers, we will find many instructors who fear machines and believe they cannot enhance learning, even though it seems inevitable that technology will be increasingly employed in teaching and learning. However, many CALL researchers agree and often state that computers will not replace teachers, whose role in aspects such as lesson planning, individual counseling, preparation and selection of materials, evaluation process and product, etc. is essential. It is also believed,

however, that teachers who use computers to give students a richer, more stimulating learning environment will replace teachers who do not.

Further related research is necessary in order to determine CALL teachers' knowledge and skill levels for further improvement in teaching as well as to find possible solutions to enhance teacher preparation courses or on-the-job training workshops.

Although there are some CALL researchers (e.g., see Lee, 2000) who believe that barriers to using CALL in the classroom do exist, the positive effect of the digital revolution on teaching and learning will be enormous, and the teaching profession must prepare now for the changes happening at present.

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