

***CALLing All Foreign Language Teachers:
Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Classroom***

(Book review)

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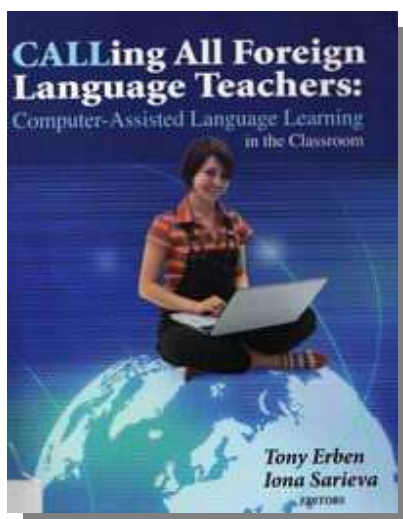
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Book details:

CALLing All Foreign Language Teachers: Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Classroom

Tony Erben and Iona Sarieva (Eds.)

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Introduction

Today, most of the schools around the world have a computer lab or more, access to the Internet and some have other equipments such as data projectors and smart boards. Yet, this does not guarantee the successful application of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as it is not enough to just send computers to schools without training language teachers regarding the use of them in language learning. Moreover, teacher training programmes often ignore training in the use of Information and Communications Technology and there is a lack of materials for teachers. However, new books published on CALL try to fill the gap by providing practical activities and ideas, one of which is *CALLing All Foreign Language Teachers: Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Classroom*.

The book *CALLing All Foreign Language Teachers: Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Classroom*, edited by Tony Erben and Iona Sarieva, contains 8 sections and 18 chapters which present materials and ideas for foreign language teachers who need to be guided to learn how to use CALL with their students by providing practical techniques, ideas and step-by-step guidelines. Some chapters are available online. Please see Cheng, R., & Summers, R. (2008); Erben, T., Ruth, B., Jin, L., Summers, R., & Eisenhower, K. (2008) and Summers, R., & Madrigal, R. (2008).

Presentation

Section I, “Incorporating Computer-Assisted Language Learning”, introduces 3 chapters on the principles explaining second language acquisition, instructional technology, constructivism together with the impact of CALL on classroom practices, advantages and disadvantages and finally technologies that are on the horizon and their potential outcome. Moreover, chapter 4 starts to discuss CALL activities for language classrooms such as Word Processing, use of E-mails and building websites using *Yahoo! GeoCities Web Site Builder*.

Section II, “E-creation”, is about using software tools to create activities that will help students and support teachers. Chapters 5 to 8 in this section deal with presentation software, desktop publishing, creating sound files and video streaming via *iMovie* and *Movie Maker*.

Section III, “E-communication”, discusses the software packages that allow asynchronous and synchronous interaction. Chapters 9 to 11 introduce Listservs, Internet Chat using *Yahoo Messenger* and chat rooms and audio communication (Voice Over IP) using *Skype*.

Section IV, “E-extensions”, addresses virtual learning environment, inquiry-based tasks and interactive exercise creation. Chapters 12 to 14 deal with *Nicenet*, a free course-management system; *WebQuests* for creating inquiry-oriented activities and a popular interactive quiz creation tool *Hot Potatoes*.

Section V, “E-assessment”, introduces alternative assessment strategies and online survey tools. Chapters 15 to 16 address electronic portfolios and electronic surveys using online survey tools such as *SurveyMonkey*.

Section VI, “Taking your own journey”, presents ready-made technology-inspired activities and a collection of links of websites. Chapters 17 and 18 have a wide range of activities created using all of the technologies presented/discussed in previous chapters and a collection of links of websites for teachers who would like to embrace other websites/CALL materials.

Evaluation

This book is written by authors, many of whom were, at the time when the book was written, foreign language instructors and students in the doctoral program of second language acquisition and instructional technology at the University of South Florida. This resulted in a practical volume which is free of technical jargon, thereby accessible to foreign language teachers.

The best aspect of the book is that each chapter not only introduces websites/software packages but also provides detailed instructions on their usage. Better still, a variety of innovative and exciting activities are presented within the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards as well as ISTE’s (International Society for Technology in Education) National Technology Standards (NETS). Moreover, most of the chapters provide activities and materials for the teaching of other languages.

The challenge that any book on technology or CALL faces is that after the book is published, the materials it covers can be out-dated, new technologies may emerge or the detailed instruction on any website/software may not apply simply due to the wide changes on the respective websites/software. However, this book seems to overcome this issue by assisting its readers with their website (<http://terben9397.googlepages.com/callingallforeignlanguageteachers>), which aims to keep updating the materials/activities/ideas in the book using the latest technologies. Readers are suggested to refer to this webpage for new online chapters on Blogs, Wikis and Podcasts.

Although the book has a variety of valuable features, it does not overcome some shortcomings. For instance, the book could have been divided into chapters taking the four skills into consideration, together with the research findings related to the use of technology in each skill. It could have provided detailed tutorials with simulations and the links in the chapters on an accompanying CD for convenience. The book, unfortunately, does not have an index, which I think is a real handicap to readers wishing to easily access the information presented in the book. It would also have been beneficial to free online journals, such as *AJET* (<http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet.html>), *CALL EJ Online* (<http://www.tell.is.ritsumeai.ac.jp/callejonline/>), *Language Learning & Technology* (<http://lt.msu.edu/>), *Teaching English with Technology* (<http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm>), or *TESL EJ* (<http://tesl-ej.org/>), for additional teaching, research or new ideas on the use of technology in foreign language teaching and learning.

Recommendation

CALLing All Foreign Language Teachers: Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Classroom is an invaluable contribution to the field of great help to novice foreign language teachers who are willing to integrate technology into their classrooms, but do not know where to start. I suggest any language teacher interested in CALL read this book together with the ones by Chapelle and Jamieson (2008) and Dudeney and Hockly (2007) as they complement each other in terms of discussion of specific tools, research findings and step-by-step instruction.

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