Book Review:
*Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition*

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This book investigates computer application in second language acquisition (CASLA) by minutely and widely reviewing research in this promising area. It also considers the future development in the field. It covers mainly the following three areas: computer-assisted second language learning (including the notion of CALL), computer-assisted second language assessment, and computer assisted second language research.

The book starts with viewing the historical foundation of CASLA, which is an intriguing documentary of development of a field of science. From the days before the upcoming of affordable microcomputer, professionals have long been struggling with the question: whether or not computers should be used for language teaching. Those days are now history. As it is stated in the book, most of the newcomers to the profession have uncritically accepted that computer is used for teaching EFL/ESL. The questions today we face are ones such as, whether a particular software package is facilitative and/or how a particular CASLA program should be designed and managed. Whether if computer should be used is no longer an issue, but how best computer software can be implemented is. Thus it is quite appropriate to start the book from the overall view over the, albeit short but with-giant-leap, historical development of the field.

The second chapter deals with the related disciplines to CASLA, namely, Educational technology (including CAL and computer-assisted collaborative learning, CSCL), Artificial Intelligence, Computational linguistics, Corpus linguistics, and most importantly, Computer-assisted assessment. This chapter itself is a very compact guide about these relevant fields. However, to the readers who lack the knowledge of each field, further explanations might be necessary. Collaborative learning, for example, was yet an embryonic, experimental field at the time this book was written. Despite its promising future, the contribution to SLA is yet to be known. This chapter should better be placed at the end of the book as a part of conclusion or discussion.

Chapter 3 clearly states the futility of comparison between computer-using learners (learning) and those through other media. The principle is evaluating CALL as an instructional solution to the problem of instructed SLA. Without this, the entire discussion might be meaningless, at least, for the educators of language related fields. So Chapelle minutely analyzes the problem concerning instructed SLA. Starting with the basic understanding of hypotheses about instructed SLA, the author carefully traces the development of research on instructed SLA. The list of research includes studies of creating ideal conditions of instruction and communication tasks. The author
cites five guidelines that Skehan (1998) offered for implementing effective instructed SLA:

1. Choose a range of target structures
2. Choose tasks which meet the utility condition
3. Select and sequence tasks to achieve balanced goal development
4. Maximize the chances of focus on form through intentional manipulation
5. Use cycles of accountability

The author further considers these guidelines from the current technical and theoretical perspective. To conclude, under the ideal condition, instructed SLA should be selective as for learning materials, carefully tuned for the utility condition with balanced goal development, and focused on form. The hypothesis behind these guidelines is that the syntactic mode of processing helps learners to internalize new forms. In this process, the learners can improve the accuracy of their existing grammatical knowledge. Communicative language acquisition is based on negotiation of meaning and modification of output. The author also makes comments on Skehan's identification of eight characteristics of communicative tasks, namely (1) modified interaction, (2) modified output, (3) time pressure, (4) modality, (5) support, (6) surprise (introduction of an unexpected element during task completion), (7) control, and (8) stakes (learners' perception of the importance of accurate performance). A well-organized CALL program is supposed to have all the above characteristics. It is also intriguing the author mentions the importance of socio-affective conditions for SLA.

The construct of willingness to communicate, WTC, is basically comprised of the following five layers, namely (1) the desire to communicate with a particular person, (2) communicative self-confidence at that particular moment, (3) interpersonal motivation, (4) intergroup motivation, (5) attitude. All of the above layers can be dealt with in a CALL class situation, though both Skehan and Sick (2001) consider other social layers of WTC, they are not the issues here. The above discussion is very useful for us all who are involved in CAL instruction.

One of the intriguing discussions of this chapter is evaluation of CALL programs. The author simply evaluates CALL program whether it is a situation-specific argument. This means developers of CALL need to be familiar with criteria for evaluation, which should be applied to a particular context. Although this may not restrict the possibility of objective third party inspection, this issueworth discussing further elsewhere.

Useful criteria for CALL task's appropriateness are: (1) language learning potential, (2) learner fit (the amount of opportunity for engagement with language), (3) meaning focus, (4) authenticity, (5) positive impact (effectiveness), and (6) practicality. These are the same criteria on which Dokkyo's ALS (academic listening skills) program is trying to meet and is successfully achieving so far. The discussion of the program evaluation issues is very insightful and suggestive to both educators and administrators who engage CALL programs.

In Chapter 4, the author deals with the issues concerning CALT, computer assisted language testing. The issues are, though very intriguing and relevant to the field, beyond the scope of a single CALL program designer. CALT is, with its scale and cost, inevitably developed by a third party, i.e., publishers and testing organization, such as TOEFL Council. What makes this chapter useful for us educators/administrator is the author's criteria for test evaluation. The author lists up six qualities of test usefulness: (1) reliability, (2) construct validity, (3) authenticity, (4) interactivity, (5) positive impact, and (6) practicality. Interactivity and practicality are the particularly important issues in CALL. Test takers should be able to utilize their knowledge and communicative language strategies in accomplishing a test task (interactivity), and the design of the test should be based on materials.
adequate for the design, and the use of the test. Issues concerning empirical evaluation of CALT are particularly useful and intriguing discussion for us, educators/administrators. The empirical methods for investigating test usefulness are summarized into the same six criteria above. As for reliability, it is intriguing the author suggests partial-credit scoring would provide more precise measurement together with larger variance. To date, CALT has been chosen by most of institutions mainly for its judgmental power and practicality. However, the author suggests that for future development and for more logical examination of reliability, it is required to judge about the extent to which the test reflects the corresponding empirical question embedded in the test scores. The author concludes the future possibilities offered by CALT are in need of evaluation in view of the broader context of language testing.

In Chapter 5, the author discusses ideal features of CASLR, computer-assisted SLA research. As valid SLA research always does, CASLR should maintain the quality in the following five areas: (1) operationalization, (2) generalizability, (3) difficulty level, (4) impact, and (5) practicality. It should be noted that some micro-level design features such as presentation of an incidental condition need to be considered in view of the degree to which the completion of task 'presents the theorized ideal of a good SLA task' (p137). In other words, CASLR should be treated as a type of SLA research and all the quality control should be applied to it as it is applied to other types of SLA research.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, future direction for CASLA is discussed. Although the book was first published almost a decade ago (2001), it is remarkable that the author's discussion is mostly fresh and relevant in this rapidly growing field. Though much remains to be learned about SLA process, most research support many hypotheses about design and implementation of CALL so far. In an ideal relationship between SLA research and CALL, research findings provide a means to construct and evaluate CALL in a way that can 'inform SLA research through classroom studies' (p.163), and vice versa.

CASLA software development is treated as a separate issue. Although many of the existing software concepts used in CASLA are familiar ones such as word-processing, e-mail, and the Internet, CASLA needs to be developed through the use of higher-level programming languages, specific purpose programming languages, tools and templates. From the development of these areas, CASLA software will receive a lot of benefit. Such an authoring system is, though, still yet to come. Until then, software development and implementation are prohibitively difficult and time-consuming projects.

Conclusion
The accomplishment of CALL, CALT, and CASLR is so rapid and gives us little chance to catch up once we lose track. A brand-new CALL system today might be a useless gigantic garbage heap tomorrow. As educators/administrators, we should carefully evaluate incoming information and keep trying to implement it considering the pedagogical impact first. Sharing information and understanding concerns in both pedagogical and administrative issues are indispensable for the future development of CASLA. The author concludes the book stating that collaboration between professions is indispensable for the 21 century CASLA. With the development of infrastructure, CASLA will contribute to the further and deeper understanding of the process of language acquisition.

References