

Book reviews

MULTILINGUAL COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Multilingual Matters

Buendgens-Kosten, J. & Elsner, D. (2018)

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Multilingual Computer Assisted Language Learning is a volume of studies on a new methodology and pedagogical approach that combines multilingual and digital technology strategy to support (English as a) second/foreign/additional language learning and teaching. The editors, Buendgens-Kosten and Elsner, are professors at the Goethe University Frankfurt in Germany. The editors put forward a view that, for multilingualism, the two or more languages are co-existing or co-present; all the languages and any kind of language competence are meaningful for them within and without language learning contexts. The editors emphasise an essential need for viewing language use and language learning from a multilingual perspective to respond to today's linguistically diverse world. The editors also recognise the important role of digital media in daily life and in language learning and teaching. Following the 'multilingual turn' in language education (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014) and building on the concept of CALL (computer assisted language learning), the editors coin the term Multilingual CALL (MCALL) to highlight the purposeful integration of more than one language in CALL contexts. According to the editors:

“Multilingual CALL is the study and practice of language learning with digital media in non-monolingual contexts or settings or using non-monolingual media. This may involve the use and/or activation of native language(s), previously studied language(s), heritage language(s) or dialect(s). Multilingual CALL can be multilingual due to the multilinguality of learners, due to the multilinguality of group of learners (including telecollaboration or CMC settings) or due to the multilinguality of teaching material/tasks.”

Using the Multilingual CALL approach to language learning and teaching is the key theme of this book. Contributors include researchers as well as practitioners in (English as a) second/foreign/additional language learning, TESOL, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and bilingual education from Germany, United Kingdom (UK), the Netherlands, the United States (US), and New Zealand. They demonstrate various ways of using Multilingual CALL approach to language learning and teaching in different settings and contexts for different purposes.

The digital media discussed in the studies involve chat rooms, computer games, digital stories and eBook apps, online texts, telecollaboration via interactive whiteboards, online communication vehicles such as Facebook, home-made videos and cartoons, and tablets. Participants include learners from kindergarten to university in settings from classrooms, after-school clubs, to informal online practices. Languages referred to comprise English, Russian, Romance languages, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.

The book is divided into five sections, comprising 13 chapters, plus an introduction by the editors and concluding remarks by Gabriela Meier from the University of Exeter in UK.

In Multilingual Call: Introduction, the editors discuss the concepts of multilingualism and CALL, stressing the need for a 'Multilingual Turn in CALL', and introduce the concept of MCALL and chapters.

Part 1, *Multiliteracies and MCALL*, comprises two chapters (Chapters 1 and 2), exploring MCALL from theoretical perspectives with focuses on developing multiliteracies in digital environments.

Part 2, *Multilingual Texts*, consists of five chapters (Chapters 3 to 7), investigating the use of multilingual digital texts from multimodal apps and the use of authentic academic texts in students' home languages. The integration with content learning and students' language use strategy (e.g., code-switching) are also discussed.

Part 3, *Intercomprehension and CALL*, consists of two chapters (Chapters 8 and 9), examining the roles of MCALL in enhancing metalinguistic awareness and facilitating intercomprehension among students with different mother tongues.

Part 4, *Multilingual Online Exchange and Telecollaboration*, comprises two chapters (Chapters 10 and 11). Studies in this section shift the focus to online communication among distant

learners/users with different mother tongues in both formal and informal contexts, exploring the role of MCALL in promoting the development of plurilingual competence.

Part 5, *MCALL and Professional Development of Teachers*, consists of two chapters (Chapters 12 and 13), highlighting the important role of teachers in creating multilingual learning environments and examining the value of video analyses in teacher education in English as a second language and/or English as a foreign language (ESL and/or EFL).

In *Concluding Remarks, Learning in Multilingually and Digitally Mediated Spaces: The MCALL Approach*, drawing on findings from the 13 chapters, Gabriela Meier discusses opportunities, challenges, limitations, and implications of the MCALL approach to language learning and teaching and suggests directions for future research in this field.

The 13 chapters together provide rich resources and sample tasks as well as valuable evaluations and thoughts on the MCALL approach and show how teachers can use the MCALL approach to support (English as a) second/foreign/additional language learning and teaching in multilingual contexts and in professional development. The chapters illustrate ‘a special relationship’ between multilingualism and CALL. As Meier points out that recognising the new ways of communication and learning in today’s multilingual world, the MCALL approach offers a pedagogic response to recent linguistic and technological developments in language education.

One of the great values of the MCALL approach reflected in the book is that the MCALL approach validates multilingual students’ home language(s) as learning resources. This is particularly important for multilingual students from immigrant families. Viewing multilingualism from a more contemporary holistic lens, the MCALL approach engages students using their whole linguistic repertoires to enhance language learning. It also facilitates opportunities for students to promote autonomous learning and deep learning of (English as a) second/foreign/additional language. In this regard, the MCALL approach reflects a radical shift from monolingual to multilingual language pedagogy in second/foreign/additional language learning.

In summary, this book greatly contributes to the emerging field of MCALL that combines multilingualism and CALL. The book offers rich sources, valuable thoughts, and great inspiration to researchers, practitioners, and preservice teachers in language education (including ESL/EFL and TESOL).

References

- Conteh, J., & G. Meier (Eds.) (2014). *The multilingual turn in languages education: Opportunities and challenges*. Multilingual Matters.
- May, S. (Ed.) (2014). *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education*. Routledge.