

## Foreword

It is indeed timely for the Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) to dedicate a 2nd special edition to Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in July 2015. As guest editor it is my pleasure to present the Arab World English Journal 2<sup>nd</sup> special edition that is wholly devoted to CALL. The use of computers in language learning has come a long way. Technology has expanded its scope to the multifaceted domains of second language learning, requiring new knowledge and skills for those who wish to assimilate it into their professional practice or understand its impact on the language teacher and learner (Hubbard, 2009). However, the technological changes are so rapid that CALL knowledge and skills must be constantly revisited to stay abreast of the field.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning is recognized as an approach to language learning and teaching involving the active use of computers and technology. Levy (1997:1) defines CALL briefly as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning". Levy's definition is upheld by the vast majority of CALL practitioners. Chapelle (2001) linked the design and evaluation of CALL tasks to a set of principles derived primarily from the research base of the interactionist perspective of second language acquisition (SLA). Recent techniques in CALL reinforce more learner-centred, explorative approaches rather than traditional teacher-centred approaches. These include the rapidly growing field of online learning, computer-based assessment, teacher and learner training, and a number of emerging areas such as mobile language learning and virtual worlds. A key focus of CALL is to raise awareness of its models for language learning development. The systematic studies and understanding of the growing learning concepts can be valuable to both language learning and teaching development.

The collection of papers and research reports in the 2<sup>nd</sup> special edition covers a wide range of topics: such as the importance of cohesion in producing interactive and meaningful discourse in online discussion forums, the role of online tutorials designed for improving language proficiency in writing essays, taking advantage of the proliferation of texts or corpus in electronic forms for language teaching and learning purposes, using a combination of e-learning and face-to-face learning (or blended learning) to design and pilot-test training programs for medical education in English, using bibliographic research software programs in post graduate English courses for using online databases and indexes, using technology and learning resources in translation programs, using ICT tools, and the concept of using ICT in English Language Teaching, and using Digital literacy measurement tools for English-language users of the Web for the creation of interventions designed to overcome difference in digital skill levels. Each of the papers demonstrates the application of CALL in various pedagogical approaches and contexts of learning.

In the paper on the analysis of cohesive links and content, interactional quality and objective measures based on the conceptual framework of Nandi, the author underscores the analysis of cohesive links based on the discourse analysis technique and the discussions analysis based on content, and interactional quality based on the framework of Nandi (2009). The results of the analysis revealed that the discussions which are long and deep have more usage of cohesive links than surface discussions or replies.

The paper on the use of online tutorials for advancing English writing skills explores an online tutorial package specially designed for advanced level students to improve their proficiency in writing essays and investigates to what extent the technology-based online tutorial assist the tutors and the students in the teaching and learning process.

The paper on the availability and use of technology and learning resources in translation programs explored the availability and use of technology and learning resources in translation programs at Saudi universities. The data analysis shows that most participating students perceived there was a lack of translation labs, machine translations, translation software, print media, and audio and visual materials in general in universities. In addition, the findings showed a deficit in the utilization and adaption of technology and learning resources in translation programs.

The paper on the application of information and communication technology tools for English Language teaching in the context of Oman investigated facilitating the teaching and learning of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The article summarizes some of the merits and the demerits of the use of ICT tools, and the concept of using ICT in ELT based on the researcher's review of recent studies and highlight findings on the effectiveness of the application of ICT tools on EFL (English as Foreign Language) writing performance of Omani EFL learners.

The paper on how learner corpora can be used in paperless classroom to promote ESL learners' vocabulary skills looks at learner corpora and introduces methods for Malaysian English teachers to compile their students' essays and utilize the corpus. The error analysis technique is used to identify students' language errors and detect low frequency words and then generate lists for redrafting their essays.

The paper on testing web-based digital literacy assessment tools with Arabic speaking internet users focuses on digital literacy for using web resources effectively. The paper reports on observations of native Arabic speaker's web searches, their Internet knowledge and their self-reported digital skill level. A quantitative regression analysis revealed that Internet knowledge is the best predictor of successful searches, although self-reported skill predicts search success. Implications for governments planning ICT development are further discussed in the paper.

The paper on the development and pilot testing of a blended learning program for medical education in English, reports on the design and pilot-testing of a training program. While the data showed that the program may be a useful starting point for future studies toward developing a revised program; the study commented that additional research would be necessary to determine the most effective type of training.

The paper on bibliographic research and data organization reports on a study conducted to investigate creating a bibliography efficiently and easily with a software package Zotero that also assist in the creation of personal databases. The paper concludes that there is an urgent needs to plan for technological tools in Algerian universities, and that presently students and teachers lack information literacy and readiness to use technology in classrooms.

Finally the paper on the educational gains derived through the use of mobile phone utilization in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory behind effective instructional use of such technology, discusses impediments to learning while using mobile devices and methods of engaging students at pedagogical levels. The paper further explores how mobiles can be employed as language learning platforms, and presents results in support of the foundation of a multi-regional synopsis of mobile phone use in ELT. The paper highlights in particular the considerations necessary for effective future implementation of mobile learning technologies in Afro-Asian contexts, and points to areas for further research.

I am positive that this special 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of AWEJ on CALL will provide encouragement to the empirical base for CALL, and contribute meaningfully to a better understanding of current technology and computer based approaches in language learning and teaching, as well as enhance ways of working across institutions and regions leading to a community of practice.

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