

Future language teachers learning to become CALL designers – methodological perspectives in studying complexity

Tiina Keisanen¹ and Leena Kuure²

Abstract. Language teachers of the future, our current students, live in an increasingly technology-rich world. However, language students do not necessarily see their own digital practices as having relevance for guiding language learning. Research in the fields of CALL and language education more generally indicates that teaching practices change slowly and the integration of technologies into pedagogic practices needs to be developed. This sets challenges for language teacher education: we should be able to educate language teaching professionals who are agile (but responsible) in adapting their pedagogic practices in response to the changes in society. To meet this challenge, we have been developing an approach for university language students to strengthen their expertise in designing theoretically informed CALL pedagogies. However, these attempts have not been fully successful as the development of pedagogic expertise involves a complex rhizome of factors and issues reaching from the participants' early language histories to current practices in the field. In order to shed light on this complexity, three different research approaches are compared for their suitability to explore developing pedagogic expertise, i.e. nexus analysis, conversation analysis and multimodal (inter)action analysis. The analysis focuses on multiple data from the university course, used as a case example.

Keywords: research methods, professional expertise, language teacher education, change.

1. University of Oulu, Finland; tiina.keisanen@oulu.fi

2. University of Oulu, Finland; leena.kuure@oulu.fi

How to cite this article: Keisanen, T., & Kuure, L. (2015). Future language teachers learning to become CALL designers – methodological perspectives in studying complexity. In F. Helm, L. Bradley, M. Guarda, & S. Thoušný (Eds), *Critical CALL – Proceedings of the 2015 EUROCALL Conference, Padova, Italy* (pp. 301-305). Dublin: Research-publishing.net. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2015.000349>

1. Introduction

Our everyday life is increasingly technology-rich and we are constantly urged to take this into account in different fields of society, especially education. However, research indicates that teaching practices change slowly (see [Facer & Sanford, 2010](#)). There is also variation in relation to how newly qualified language teachers adapt to changes. Some tend to believe that there are external forces constraining their pedagogic approaches, while others feel empowered as language educators making their own choices ([Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011](#)).

It also seems to be challenging to put objectives into practice: even if the course plan appears to promote professional competence and lifelong learning, the concrete activities performed in the classroom may be very mechanical ([Jalkanen, Pitkänen-Huhta, & Taalas, 2012](#)). Diverse attempts have been made for facilitating modern pedagogic design in the fields of learning design (e.g. [Conole, 2012](#)), design-based research (see [Bergroth-Koskinen & Seppälä, 2012](#)), educational engineering related to conflicting personal and pedagogic goals ([Colpaert, 2010](#)) as well as participatory design of language learning with new technologies ([Kuure et al., 2015](#)). The current study takes a methodological perspective to the issues involved.

2. Method

The investigation of the development of pedagogic expertise of future language teachers involves a complex rhizome of factors and issues. Three research approaches will be examined as regards their suitability for capturing the complexity of developing pedagogic expertise.

2.1. Three approaches to study complex (inter)actions

This study focuses on the following question: what are the affordances and constraints of nexus analysis, conversation analysis and multimodal interaction analysis in studying the development of professional expertise among future language teachers?

Nexus Analysis (NA) applies diverse tools of discourse and interaction analysis, with an ethnographic emphasis. Social action is seen to arise from the social relationships among participants (interaction order), people's life experiences, memories and learning (historical body) and the physical, semiotic setting (discourses in place) ([Scollon & Scollon, 2004](#)). In doing NA, the researcher

first engages the nexus of practice by becoming a participant in the activity being examined. S/he then navigates the nexus of practice, at the same time contributing to change as a member of the community.

The interest in **Conversation Analysis** (CA) lies in discovering the orderly practices with which people conduct their everyday lives in social interaction with others. CA views social interaction as organized in sequences of actions where the design and timing of a vocal or embodied action builds on what has occurred immediately before and, in turn, impacts on what comes next (e.g. [Sacks, 1992](#)). Interactional practices can thus be examined as they emerge and evolve through participation and collaboration in multiparty interactions on a moment-by-moment basis, in video-recorded data (see, e.g. [Goodwin, 2013](#)).

Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis (MIA) ([Norris, 2004](#)) is based on mediated discourse theory, as is nexus analysis. Social action is the unit of analysis, produced by social actors with tools, the environment and each other. MIA also pays attention to the more distant discourses traceable in the site of engagement, visible as frozen actions (e.g. design of a traditional classroom). Collaborative identity production, which is considered as an orchestration of identity elements (e.g. being a mother or a wife), is also highlighted ([Norris, 2011](#)).

2.2. Data and the research process

The observations are based on four iterations of a university level course that focused on the affordances of new technologies on language learning and teaching. The materials were gathered from face-to-face meetings and online work. Course design drew on a socio-cultural view of language learning, emphasizing the learners' opportunities for participation. A problem-based approach was followed whereby students designed and implemented different kinds of technology-enhanced projects. Cultural probes and diverse action methods were used to facilitate the students' critical examination of current practices and search for new solutions for future CALL.

The engaging perspective involved ethnographic fieldwork on language education with special emphasis on language teacher education. We examined the nature of current practices and future developments of language education together with the students. In so doing we navigated the practices using different kinds of action methods and the approach of participatory design. These were attempts at contributing to the language students' understanding of the requirements of their future profession as language teachers.

3. Discussion

Throughout the annual iterations, we have observed difficulties in how the shared goal is being negotiated among participants. Despite the various efforts to help students detach themselves from the current classroom-based practices of language teaching to envision new kinds of futures for language learning, the students easily returned back to their familiar practices and thinking.

In order to understand these challenges and the complexities of the situation (e.g. multiple participants, interactions, discourses, materialities and temporalities), we have explored the notion of change through theoretical considerations and empirical analysis. Each iteration of the course has produced some insight into the complexity of change, leading to different kinds of experimentations and new interventions for instigating change. However, traditional views and historical bodies change very slowly, and the problems still persist. Our current understanding is that the next step would be to apply nexus analysis in the course for the students' own examination of their historical bodies.

4. Conclusion

Investigating and contributing to change requires long-term commitment. As CALL designers, and in studying the complexity of developing pedagogic expertise, we have found that NA suits our work well as an overall framework: it enables the development of participatory agency through its focus on social action as an intersection of interaction order, discourses in place and especially historical body of all the participants. The sites of engagement where future directions and their links to our past are negotiated, are crucial from the point of view of change. These moments face-to-face or in distributed time-places can be investigated in detail with MIA and CA. MIA enables one to examine communication in its wider socio-historical context, while CA provides a view on social interaction as it is constituted in situ. These approaches provide an interpretative framework for understanding what is going on and where the crucial social actions hindering or advancing change are made visible and hence analyzable. This enables the participants (teachers and students themselves) to research and facilitate change.

In teacher education, the concepts of reflective practitioner and action research are widely acknowledged. The present approach takes this a step further: it provides a participatory research perspective on future language teachers' professional growth and provides tools for social change.

5. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the language students who have participated in the courses actively and as co-researchers provided important perspectives to interpret language learning and teaching in the technology-rich world.

References

- Bergroth-Koskinen, U.M., & Seppälä, R. (2012). Teacher-researchers exploring design-based research to develop learning designs in higher education language teaching. *Apples - Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 6(2), 95-112.
- Colpaert, J. (2010). Elicitation of language learners' personal goals as design concepts. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(3), 259-274. doi:10.1080/17501229.2010.513447
- Conole, G. (2012). *Designing for learning in an open world*. New York: Springer.
- Facer, K., & Sanford, R. (2010). The next 25 years?: Future scenarios and future directions for education and technology. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 26(1), 74-93. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2729.2009.00337.x
- Goodwin, C. (2013). The co-operative, transformative organization of human action and knowledge. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 46(1), 8-23. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2012.09.003
- Jalkanen, J., Pitkänen-Huhta, A., & Taalas, P. (2012). Changing society – changing language learning and teaching practices? In M. Bendtsen, M. Björklund, L. Forsman, & K. Sjöholm (Eds.), *Global trends meet local needs* (pp. 219-239). Vasa: Åbo Akademi Press.
- Kuure, L., Molin-Juustila, T., Keisanen, T., Riekkö, M., Iivari, N., & Kinnula, M. (2015). Switching perspectives: from a language teacher to a designer of language learning with new technologies. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. Manuscript accepted for publication. doi:10.1080/09588221.2015.1068815
- Norris, S. (2004). *Analyzing multimodal interaction: a methodological framework*. London: Routledge.
- Norris, S. (2011). *Identity in (inter)action: introducing multimodal (inter)action analysis*. Berlin: deGruyter Mouton. doi:10.1515/9781934078280
- Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2011). Constructing practical knowledge of teaching: eleven newly qualified language teachers' discursive agency. *The Language Learning Journal*, 39(3), 365-379. doi:10.1080/09571736.2010.544750
- Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on conversation*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S.W. (2004). *Nexus analysis: discourse and the emerging Internet*. London: Routledge.

Published by Research-publishing.net, not-for-profit association
Dublin, Ireland; info@research-publishing.net

© 2015 by Research-publishing.net (collective work)
© 2015 by Author (individual work)

Critical CALL – Proceedings of the 2015 EUROCALL Conference, Padova, Italy
Edited by Francesca Helm, Linda Bradley, Marta Guarda, and Sylvie Thouéšny

Rights: All articles in this collection are published under the Attribution-NonCommercial -NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Under this licence, the contents are freely available online (as PDF files) for anybody to read, download, copy, and redistribute provided that the author(s), editorial team, and publisher are properly cited. Commercial use and derivative works are, however, not permitted.



Disclaimer: Research-publishing.net does not take any responsibility for the content of the pages written by the authors of this book. The authors have recognised that the work described was not published before, or that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. While the information in this book are believed to be true and accurate on the date of its going to press, neither the editorial team, nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein. While Research-publishing.net is committed to publishing works of integrity, the words are the authors' alone.

Trademark notice: product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Copyrighted material: every effort has been made by the editorial team to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this book. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this book.

Typeset by Research-publishing.net
Fonts used are licensed under a SIL Open Font License

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-28-5 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)
Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never 'out of stock' or 'out of print'.

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-29-2 (Ebook, PDF, colour)
ISBN13: 978-1-908416-30-8 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)

Legal deposit, Ireland: The National Library of Ireland, The Library of Trinity College, The Library of the University of Limerick, The Library of Dublin City University, The Library of NUI Cork, The Library of NUI Maynooth, The Library of University College Dublin, The Library of NUI Galway.

Legal deposit, United Kingdom: The British Library.
British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

Legal deposit, France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: décembre 2015.