

Instructors' attitudes towards CALL and MALL in L2 classrooms

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Abstract. As part of an ongoing study on learners' and instructors' attitudes toward the use of computers and mobile devices in second-language (L2) learning situations, our purpose here is to identify how language instructors value the use of computers and mobile devices in their teaching. We compare the responses of a survey administered during the past four years to instructors within two faculties of a private university in Tokyo, Japan, with the responses collected from a similar survey administered in 2014 to instructors solicited through various Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) organizations. The response rate for the in-house survey during the first three years was low; however, in 2015 the response rate was much higher, with responses from both full-time and part-time staff totaling 34. The survey responses from the CALL organizations totaled 121. The respondents' places of employment ranged from Europe to the Asia Pacific Rim. In addition to offering an interpretation of a sampling of the Likert scale items found on the surveys, the authors concentrate on comparing the comments offered by instructors regarding which skills they focus on in the CALL classroom, as well as what applications they encourage their students to use on their mobile devices.

Keywords: survey analyses, recommended mobile applications, intrinsic motivation, adoption of mobile technology.

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1. Introduction

The incorporation of CALL and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) technologies by foreign language educators worldwide has significantly altered the role of the teacher, leading to a validation of Kurzweil's (2000) prediction that "education will advance from 2009, with students using computers nearly exclusively for learning, with teachers available as motivators" (p. 192). However, as language education surges forward, does the incorporation of these technologies benefit the learner or simply satisfy the instructor's need to be innovative? Also, why are some teachers still hesitant to incorporate these potentially powerful technologies? The main goal of this study is to try to answer these questions as a way to help gain a better understanding of current and future states of information and communications technologies and methodologies, and how they can be more effectively utilized to improve foreign language education. We attempt to achieve this goal, in part, by targeting two surveys: the international survey was administered to CALL practitioners around the world, particularly living in and working at universities in Europe and the Pacific Rim region, and the in-house survey was administered to English language instructors currently employed at a private university in Tokyo (Aoyama Gakuin University). Our main goal is to gauge the attitudes of instructors regarding their use of CALL and MALL technologies in teaching English as a second/foreign language. We also attempt to determine what the most commonly used programs and applications being used by instructors are and whether they are having a positive impact both in and out of the language classroom. Additionally, we focus on ascertaining what the main obstacles are that prevent foreign language educators from embracing these rapidly advancing technologies.

2. Method

2.1. International survey

Both surveys were created using SurveyMonkey®⁴. The international survey was comprised of 42 questions based on the Likert scale five-item response type (1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree"). The target audience was organizations comprised of CALL practitioners. The survey was distributed in 2014 to volunteers solicited through the LinkedIn™ CALL page (targeting EUROCALL members) and direct solicitations were made to the members of the CALL section of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALTCALL) and to the Asia-

4. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

Pacific Association for CALL (APACALL) through their respective organizations. The survey responses from the CALL organizations totaled 121. The respondents' employment locations, as could be expected given the sources tapped, ranged from Europe to Asia, including Japan and other Asia Pacific Rim countries, with a few exceptions. In terms of age, the respondents were equally distributed in the 30s, 40s, and 50s. Male respondents outnumbered females 57% to 43%. Additionally, 80.9% of the respondents were employed as full-time instructors engaged in second language (L2) teaching.

2.2. In-house survey

The in-house survey was comprised of 32 questions of the Likert scale five-item response type (1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree"). The survey was administered four times over a four-year period (2011-2015). To ensure anonymity, all questions regarding personal information, such as age and nationality, were eliminated. The number of English teaching staff of the two faculties currently totals 34. While the total number of respondents participating in the study during the first three years averaged only 16, this number rose in 2015 due to an increase in the number of instructors employed within both faculties as a result of an expanded English curriculum.

3. Results

3.1. Survey (CALL)

Table 1 shows the mean response ratings of a select number of survey items related to CALL. We were interested in gauging both groups' attitudes toward their use of CALL in the classroom. As mentioned earlier, a five-point Likert Scale was used. Overall, both groups responded that CALL technology was readily available at their respective universities, with the in-house group responding slightly higher than the international group (4.4 vs. 3.7). Conversely, the international group was more confident than the in-house group in their comfort level using CALL (4.3 vs. 3.5). In response to "Using CALL is not worth the trouble", the in-house group agreed slightly more than the international group (2.3 vs. 1.9). As shown above, both groups' mean ratings were somewhat high for the following three items related to using CALL for English language learning: "I require my students to use CALL for learning English during class", "Using CALL technology has improved my students' English skills", and "My students enjoy using CALL technology to learn English compared to traditional methods".

Table 1. CALL-related survey items

<i>CALL technology is readily available at my university.</i>	In-house: 4.4 International: 3.7
<i>I feel comfortable using CALL.</i>	In-house: 3.5 International: 4.3
<i>Using CALL is not worth the trouble.</i>	In-house: 2.3 International: 1.9
<i>Using CALL technology has improved my students' English skills.</i>	In-house: 3.5 International: 3.9
<i>My students enjoy using CALL technology to learn English compared with traditional methods</i>	In-house: 3.5 International: 3.7
<i>I require my students to use CALL for learning English during class.</i>	In-house: 3.9 International: 3.9

3.2. Survey (MALL)

Table 2 shows both groups' responses to a select number of MALL-related items. As shown in the table, the international group was predictably more confident in using MALL than the in-house group (4.8 vs. 3.4). In response to "Using MALL is not worth the trouble" both groups were equally divided (2.5 vs. 2.4). In response to the two items "Using MALL technology has improved my students' English skills" and "My students enjoy using MALL technology to learn English", the international group was substantially higher than the in-house group (4.4 and 4.7 vs. 3.3 and 3.4, respectively).

Another area of concern with this paper is the type of applications instructors recommend and the ones the students actually use. Answers were very disparate and non-specific – dictionary and social networking were common responses. This indicates that the respondents may have misinterpreted the questions, "what applications do you recommend" and "which do you observe your students using". Despite the ambiguity of the responses, the applications commonly recommended can be categorized as "vocabulary", "dictionary", "testing", "comprehensive" (inclusive), "management", and "social networking" in descending order. The applications instructors observed their students using are similar, with the inclusion of "radio". In future surveys the authors will rephrase the questions so as to elicit more targeted responses to further this study. However, the authors

want to emphasize that the instructor’s role in guiding the students to worthwhile applications is crucial. Students may have mastered technology, but they are apt to use the easiest, most common applications available.

Table 2. MALL-related survey items

<i>I feel comfortable using MALL technology.</i>	In-house: 3.4 International:4.8
<i>Using MALL is not worth the trouble.</i>	In-house: 2.5 International: 2.4
<i>Using MALL technology has improved my students’ English skills.</i>	In-house: 3.3 International:4.4
<i>My students enjoy using MALL technology to learn English.</i>	In-house: 3.4 International:4.7

3.3. Skills

The final area of inquiry sought to ascertain the skills that instructors focus on with their students when using mobile devices and computers. The overall pattern of responses for both groups (shown below in percentages averaged across both groups) were similar concerning mobile devices, with the following skills preferred: *vocabulary* (82%), *listening* (77%), and *reading* (67%), with *pronunciation* (44%), *writing* (36%), *speaking* (28%) and *grammar* (26%) receiving substantially fewer responses. In contrast, the response patterns for skills when using computers were less congruent. For instance, the international group favored *listening* (80%), *reading* (76%), and *vocabulary* (71%), followed by *writing* (67%) and *speaking* (60%), while the in-house group preferred *listening* (85%), *writing* (69%), *reading* (65%), and *vocabulary* (58%). Overall, both groups emphasized receptive over productive skills when using mobile devices, although with computers the tendency was to focus on both receptive and productive skills.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results revealed that both groups’ attitudes towards CALL and MALL were varied. The international group felt more comfortable and positive in using CALL and MALL in the classroom compared to the in-house group. Similarly, the international group was more in agreement that MALL can be effectively utilized to improve students’ English language skills and that their students enjoyed

using mobile devices to study English. These results come as no surprise, since a majority of international group participants were CALL specialists, while in-house respondents included a large number of non-CALL practitioners. Moreover, a majority of the in-house respondents lacked experience in using MALL with their students. A somewhat unexpected result was that both groups responded similarly to questions related to CALL technology and English language learning, with both being positive about its impact on their students' English acquisition and student satisfaction and preference for it compared to traditional methods (see [Stockwell, 2012](#) for further analysis in how CALL stacks up with traditional classroom approaches). We are hard-pressed to provide a sensible explanation for this particular response by the in-house group. One possible reason could be that since all in-house instructors are required to conduct their English classes in a CALL classroom and strongly encouraged to use the available technology, some may have felt inclined to respond more positively than they would have otherwise. The results also showed that vocabulary, dictionary, and testing apps were the most commonly recommended category of mobile apps. Additionally, both groups emphasized receptive over productive skills with students, at least when utilizing mobile devices.

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