The Emergence of a Fruitful Relationship between EUROCALL and CALICO

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EUROCALL’s relationship with CALICO dates back to 1997 when Robert Fischer became Executive Director of the North American organization. Until then, and although these two sister organizations have always seen themselves as being complementary to each other and never rivals, several attempts by Graham Davies, then president of EUROCALL, to establish a collaborative relationship with CALICO had come to no avail. The mutual understanding and reciprocal respect between Bob and Graham, which soon became a true friendship until the latter passed away in June 2012, changed everything. Through their enthusiastic and warm support for any new ideas for collaborative ventures, together they played a key role in the setting up of initiatives that were to firmly anchor the collaboration between the two organizations by bringing together their respective members.

One such initiative was the joint research policy statement signed in 1999 by EUROCALL, CALICO, and IALLT, which set the foundations for CALL to be considered a research field on its own merit as well as establishing the three pillars on which CALL is based: development, pedagogical innovation, and research. Although technology has certainly evolved in these past fourteen years, the essence of what was stated in 1999 is no doubt still true:

Scholarly activities in CALL include the development of learning environments, pedagogical innovations, and research on teaching and learning methods and second language acquisition. CALL researchers may stress one or more of these areas, as they engage in systematic inquiry seeking to discover new information, create or revise theories, and develop learning tools. (Joint Research Policy Statement, 1999).

Throughout his tenure as the executive director of CALICO, Bob Fischer always actively promoted the academic recognition of the field and its advancement; a progress that in many cases has been possible thanks to our respective annual conferences, which are unique showcases and hotbeds for generating new ideas and exchanging views and experiences on the many facets of CALL. Reduced conference fees for members of the sister organization have allowed many of us to cross the Atlantic in either direction and on many occasions, to discover
new information, create or revise theories, and develop learning tools.

It wasn’t, however, until 2005 that the grounds were firmly seeded to grow an extremely stable and fruitful relationship. Soon after our election as president and vice-president during the EUROCALL Annual General Meeting in Krakow, Bob approached us to discuss ways of further uniting researchers, developers, and practitioners from North America and Europe. A few months later, we met with the CALICO Executive Board in Hawaii, in the first of a series of meetings involving representatives of both organizations. In Hawaii, extensive and constructive discussions led to the creation of the joint membership scheme, through which members of either organization can benefit from a substantial discount upon becoming a member of the sister association. This has proved particularly beneficial to new and experienced researchers from both organizations, who can now easily take part in activities taking place on both sides of the Atlantic, submit their work to either of our respective journals, become active members of joint special interest groups (SIGs), etc., thus further contributing to theoretical and practical developments in CALL. Under Bob’s leadership, EUROCALL and CALICO have worked towards converging goals, often thanks to Bob’s regular attendance at EUROCALL Executive Committee meetings, sometimes at the cost of personal sacrifices given our different academic calendars.

Bob Fischer has been a facilitator, mentor, and supporter of an all-inclusive philosophy, well beyond North America, an example of which is his unfailing support for WorldCALL conferences and their scholarship programs. Another example of Bob’s all-inclusive philosophy can be seen in his constant support for young researchers and graduate students, be they North American, European, or from any other continent. CALICO and EUROCALL both value graduate education and recognize that fostering graduate research is crucial in the development and sustainability of our field: encouraging and supporting our research students is an investment toward the future of CALL. Bob Fischer and Esther Horn have been particularly instrumental in setting up incentives to attract younger researchers to the annual conferences held by either organization. For example, CALICO has provided a fee waiver for all graduate students, including those coming under the auspices of EUROCALL, who can then attend the annual CALICO conference as “student helpers”, thus offering them the opportunity to gain invaluable insights into their areas of interest within CALL and to become acquainted with the international CALL community. EUROCALL graduate students have greatly benefited from their participation at CALICO conferences, and all have reported that the experience has been inspiring and enriching in all respects, both personally and professionally. In collaboration with other journal editors of our field, Bob has contributed to and facilitated many workshops designed to help young researchers publish their CALL work in appropriate journals. Bob’s generosity toward new researchers, no matter where they come from, was also evident in his tireless work as chief editor of the *CALICO Journal*, a highly respected journal in the field, and his reviewing activities for journals based in Europe and elsewhere. His support and advice to new and experienced writers alike were simply invaluable. His copy-editing competencies remain second to none, and his constructive
feedback has helped many to successfully publish their research articles.

As Bob’s professional and personal impact on our communities remains as strong as ever, both organizations will undoubtedly continue to promote CALL and serve an ever-growing community of researchers, developers and practitioners. Thanks to Bob, the foundations for a long-term relationship between CALICO and EUROCALL have been laid, and it has been a privilege for both of us to have been part of the journey. Bob, we thank you for your generosity, your warm friendship and support over the years, and we hope to see you back in Europe in the near future.

NOTE

1 European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning (http://www.eurocall-languages.org)

REFERENCES