Special Issues, Impact, and Our Readership

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It is our great pleasure to present the final issue of the 39th volume of the CALICO Journal. Next year, we will celebrate our 40th anniversary, culminating in the CALICO 2023 Conference at the University of Minnesota in early June. During the past decade, the CALICO Journal has recognized the importance of special issues, drawing on our membership to suggest topics that resonate with our readership and move our field forward. Since 2014, we have published no fewer than eight special issues. We often ask ourselves whether special issues are “worth it,” as they require much more coordination and planning and careful thought as to how best to balance a focus on emerging topics of specific interest with “general” issues, where a more diverse range of themes is represented. Surely, there are advantages to publishing special issues.

However, the scant literature on the possible advantage special issues have over “regular” issues is mixed. Some research suggests that special issues may offer the potential benefits of attracting more submissions, improving impact, and increasing profits for publishers (Repiso et al., 2021). In this study, 75% of the journals examined achieved a higher average impact factor with articles published in special issues than they did with articles in regular issues. However, there did not appear to be a significant relationship between the percentage of articles a journal publishes in special issues and the overall impact of that same journal. This suggests that publishing a special issue will not necessarily attract articles with a big impact, as there are other factors that may affect that impact, such as the topic of the issue and the identity of the guest editors.

In contrast, Lee and co-workers (2019) report that general issue papers are more frequently cited in academia, but special issue papers show a better

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performance in terms of online captures and social media sharing. They suggest that special issues are beneficial for dealing with prominent and controversial subjects because the review period is much shorter than that for general issues. Brooks and Della Sala (2010) suggest that the perception of scientific quality may be inflated by the label “special.” In their study, all source items in both special and standard issues were published in the same journal. For the 53 source items for the special issues, the mean was 4.53 citations per item per year; for the 43 source items for the standard issues, the mean was 2.56 citations per item per year, which reflected a statistically significant difference in favor of special issues. We should bear in mind that most of the studies that have explicitly examined this question of journal issue type and impact have focused on a specific academic sub-discipline or even on a specific journal.

In order to examine the case of the *CALICO Journal* specifically, we considered the years (volumes) between 2014 and 2021 that contained both regular and special issues published in the journal. This resulted in six volumes, which contained 8 special issues and 10 regular issues, which yielded a total of 100 articles and editors’ introductions for comparison. Coincidentally, there was an equal number of articles in each condition (n = 50). As the *CALICO Journal* is indexed in SCOPUS, we used this database to determine how many citations each of these 100 articles had (as of October 3, 2022). A Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was run, and the requirement for homogeneity was not met. Accordingly, we ran a two-tailed Welch’s *t*-test for independent groups, comparing the citations in the special issue group (*M* = 13.86, *SD* = 17.63) with those in the regular issue group (*M* = 9.56, *SD* = 11.76). There was no significant effect for issue type; *t*(85) = 1.43, *p* = 0.155.

Nevertheless, there are other reasons for publishing special issues rather than simply citation count, of course. From the same data set, we see that the article voted “best article” by our editorial board has come from a special issue in four of the six years considered. In an effort to reach a wider readership and engage in a more focused way with cutting-edge, forward-thinking, and pedagogically relevant topics that resonate with the CALL community, the *CALICO Journal* will be publishing special issues more often over the next few years. Accordingly, we would like to give readers a peek into what the *CALICO Journal* has in store for the next two volumes.

The February 2023 issue (40.1) will be a special issue titled *XR: Crossing Reality to Enhance Language Learning*, guest edited by Randall William Sadler (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and Tricia Thrasher (Immerse). Despite having existed for decades, extended reality (XR), which includes both virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), has recently exploded in popularity and become more commercially available and affordable. Several scholars have started exploring how high-immersion VR, for example, can
benefit language learning, and studies have found that students enjoy using VR, and that it can result in a decrease in language learner anxiety. However, many of the studies thus far have been exploratory and preliminary in nature. Although these initial findings are promising, there has been a lack of empirical research assessing how this technology impacts learning processes and outcomes. This special issue will contain an editorial that will provide a solid overview of XR technologies, focusing on those covered in the special issue. This piece will then present six research articles that explore the effectiveness of both VR and AR for language learning. Articles will cover a variety of topics, ranging from how VR impacts the acquisition of prepositions of place to using AR for vocabulary instruction with bilingual children. In addition, two of the issue’s learning technology reviews will illustrate how the VR applications Wander and Dreams of Dali can be used for teaching and learning.

The October issue (40.3) will be part of the Looking Forward issues, an initiative that the CALICO Journal proposed in 2019. The purpose of the Looking Forward series is to develop thematic issues around one topic, with one leading article and several manuscripts related to the topic. The first Looking Forward issue, led by Greg Kessler (Ohio University), focused on teacher education in CALL; the next issue will be coordinated by Idoia Elola (Texas Tech University) and Ana Oskoz (University of Maryland, Baltimore County [UMBC]), and will focus on the inclusion of multimodal texts in the L2 classroom. The idea for this issue arose because, despite the increased integration of multimodal texts in the L2 classroom, the body of research that examines multimodal text creation from established theoretical and pedagogical frameworks is still limited. Further, current approaches to multimodal texts still fail to emphasize the intrinsic value and clear role of multimodality in L2 curricula. The purpose of Looking Forward: Processes, Practices, and Products of Multimodal Texts in the L2 Classroom is precisely to provide informed theoretical and pedagogical studies that examine multimodal composing through different lenses which explore, among other things, the development of diverse skills, HL/L2, identity, agency, and multilingualism. It also aims to examine how multimodal texts can be embedded in the L2 curricula both at the K–12 and the college level, in the design, creation, and implementation of such texts in the L2 classroom.

In 2024, we will again have two special issues. Issue 41.1 will be titled Social Media Pathways: Using Social Media to Help Language Learners Access Target Language Communities, co-edited by Ellen Yeh (Columbia College Chicago) and Nicholas Swinehart (University of Chicago). This special issue will investigate ways for language learners to use social media as a pathway to access target language communities, both virtual and physical. This can mean helping learners to acquire context-specific pragmatics and the social media literacy necessary for successful interaction with target language speakers in online...
communities (Sykes, 2018), or helping students to learn about specific areas, cultures, and practices to prepare them for face-to-face interaction (Godwin-Jones, 2016). Special emphasis is placed on “authentic” social media environments: those not created or used exclusively for language learning purposes, but rather environments where learners can observe and take part in the digital practices and language use that occur in the digital wilds.

Issue 41.3 will investigate *Web-Based Machine Translation in Language Teaching*, co-edited by Karina von Lindeiner-Stráský, Ursula Stickler, and Andrew Gargett (all from the Open University, UK). This special issue will explore the use of machine translation tools, formally and informally, in language teaching and learning. Web-based machine translation (WBMT), supported by freely available tools such as GoogleTranslate, MS Translate, and DeepL, has become widespread over the past decade in language education (Niño, 2020). The special issue aims to remedy the lack of understanding of what is and what is not possible in the use and future development of WBMT by bringing together different research perspectives and collecting and analyzing a wide set of data. The volume will disseminate projects already engaging in the pedagogic use of WBMT in language teaching, and will encourage practitioners to reflect on the future of our profession in light of such technological advances. It also invites reflection on the differences and similarities in international uses of and attitudes toward machine translation by explicitly including contributions dealing with a variety of modern foreign languages and teaching cultures. Some of the topics included in this special issue are the history of the interaction between machine translation, language education, and testing; technical affordances and future developments of freely available WBMT tools; attitudes of teachers and learners toward machine translation; empirical studies on the use of machine translation in language teaching; benefits and drawbacks of machine translation in teaching language and translation; innovative research methods used to investigate machine translation in language learning; and examples of successful incorporation of WBMT into language teaching.

This brings us back to the current issue, which includes five articles, two book reviews, and two learning technology reviews. The first article, “An Analysis of Current Research on Computer-Assisted L2 Vocabulary Learning: A Systematic Review” by Akbar Bahari, Allyson Eamer, and Janette Hughes, examines the challenges and affordances of technologies employed in computer-assisted vocabulary learning (CAVL). The authors, who completed a systematic review of 97 peer-reviewed articles published from 2014 to 2020, provide a roadmap for future research and present pedagogical implications, so that instructors can benefit from the affordances but also consider the challenges of CAVL in their own practice. In the following article, “Methodologies
and Pedagogical Applications of Integrating Telecollaboration in Language Teacher Education: A Synthesis of 56 Studies from 2010–2020,” Sumei Wu conducts a systematic review of 56 telecollaborative studies, published between 2010 and 2020, that focus on teacher professional learning. After examining the common methodologies and pedagogical applications employed in teacher collaboration, Wu cautions that most telecollaborative studies favor Western contexts (with particular emphasis on the United States and Europe), which indicates that the languages and cultures represented are not as diverse in telecollaborative encounters as they perhaps could or should be. Wu also provides other recommendations, such as careful consideration of the length of the projects to ensure sufficient time for teacher reflection and the need to provide more specific information regarding the length of each session and the task types employed in telecollaboration. The third article, “The Use of ASR-Equipped Software in the Teaching of Suprasegmental Features of Pronunciation: A Critical Review” by Tim Kochem, Jeanne Beck, and Erik Goodale, examines how technologies have been used to help learners develop their proficiency with suprasegmental features. The authors explore the existing trends and topics that automatic speech recognition (ASR) research has examined around the teaching and learning of suprasegmental features and the specific technologies that have been used to teach, learn, and assess suprasegmental features of speech. After reviewing 30 texts from 1990 to 2020, the authors found that there was an alignment between the ASR tools designed to interpret and evaluate suprasegmental features with the development of the technology itself. Kochem, Beck, and Goodale also notice that whereas these tools have focused, for instance, on the provision of visual pronunciation feedback and assessment, what seems to be missing in current ASR research is the development of commercially available tools which can enhance language learning. The article “Effect of Texting on Spanish Learners’ Vocabulary Acquisition and Motivation” by Lori Lye investigates the potential benefits of a nontraditional assignment, texting, on vocabulary acquisition and motivation in adult learners of Spanish. Over the course of one semester, students were given the opportunity to use the target language when interacting in small groups outside of the classroom via text messaging, a medium they already use extensively. Students were instructed to practice the newly learned content in Spanish multiple times each week via text messages with their peers, and were required to follow some guidelines set by the instructor. A comparison group completed journal entries that corresponded to each chapter covered in class. Findings showed that although the texting group produced fewer words than the journal group overall, they scored significantly higher on a vocabulary translation posttest than the journal group. Within the experimental group, the participants who completed the minimum requirements for the texting
assignment performed significantly better than those who did not. Students in the texting group reported an enjoyable and preferable experience, and felt that the assignment helped them to improve their Spanish. Finally, in “Enhancing Visual Learning with Keyword Captioned Video: An Eye-Tracking Study,” Linda C. Jones and Freddie J. Jennings explore the effects of captioning on French L2 students’ ability to gain pictorial knowledge from a short video. After viewing videos in one of three treatment conditions (full captions, keyword captions, and no captions), student visual recognition and recall of the respective video passage were measured through a recall protocol and multiple-choice posttest that each focused on the visual (rather than textual) elements of the video. Based on eye-tracking data, the more one looked within the captions field, the less one gained visually from the video. The authors discuss several practical implications for the design of L2 video-based lessons with captions.

We finish this issue with two book reviews and two learning technology reviews. Ahmed Al-Khateeb reviews Mobile Assisted Language Learning Across Educational Contexts by Valentina Morgana and Agnes Kukulksa-Hulme, and Emily Coombs reviews Simple Technology for Language Classrooms edited by Yustinus C. G. Mali. To round out the issue, Ilknur Oded and Yaniv Oded review Pear Deck, an interactive presentation tool, and Lieselotte Sippel reviews Quizlet, a vocabulary learning website and mobile app. We thank our authors and reviewers for their commitment to this journal, as well as all of those involved in its production, and hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

References


