

CALL: New competences and social spaces *Selected papers from EUROCALL 2008*

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This special issue of ReCALL is composed of articles selected from presentations made at the EUROCALL 2008 conference, hosted at the Kodolányi János University College in Székesfehérvár, Hungary. This was the second time that a EUROCALL conference was held in Hungary. János Kohn was the head of the organizing committee of the first conference in 1996. He was a highly valued and respected EUROCALL colleague, who died in March 1999. EUROCALL established the János Kohn Scholarship to commemorate and celebrate his life and work.

The theme of EUROCALL 2008 “CALL: New competences and social spaces” aimed to focus attention on the changing concepts and practices related to new competences and social spaces in language learning and teaching since the rapid changes and technological advancements in information and communication technologies e.g. social networking can facilitate the use of more diverse learning environments.

Two of the keynote speeches are included in this volume, which help to put the conference theme into a wider perspective. We begin with one of the keynote speakers, Andrea Kárpáti, who addresses the importance of the development of social skills besides ICT competences. The differences between digital natives and digital immigrants are touched upon, since it is essential to understand the competence structures of both learners and teachers in order to make use of the potential of the social web. In the second paper, Agnes Kukulska-Hulme examines one segment of the so-called new and emerging technologies, namely mobile learning and its applications. She argues that mobility in general and mobile assisted language learning in particular can facilitate the emergence of new practices in language learning, as closer connection can be created between formal and informal learning environments with the use of mobile phones and other portable devices.

Nicolas Guichon’s article is in line with the first two papers as he emphasises the importance of preparing teachers professionally for the challenges that they need to face in online pedagogy. His aim is to identify and describe the specific competences that online tutors working in multimodal and synchronous environments need to be trained for. In the fourth paper, Therese Örnberg Berglund addresses multimodality from the learner’s perspective. She investigates student interaction patterns in a multimodal desktop video conferencing environment in order to show the development of students’ conversational conventions that help to build social presence.

In the final paper from the conference, Mats Deutschmann, Luisa Panichi and Judith Molka-Danielsen report on the results of a comparative study of two online language courses delivered in Second Life. They emphasise the different modes of oral participation in transient learning spaces and how these can be achieved with well-established educational design principles in mind.

As well as the conference papers, three regular papers are published in this issue. Barbara Geraghty and Ann Marcus Quinn show how autonomous learning is promoted with the use of an interactive CD. They discuss the evaluation of independent learning of the Japanese hiragana system aided by multimedia methods offered by the interactive CD. Ana Niño, in her paper on machine translation, describes what learners and teachers identify as positive features of machine translation for foreign language learning and she also deals with those issues that learners and teachers find problematic about machine translation. The last article by David Coniam reports on a computerised essay-scoring program that shows an experiment from the field of computerised assessment.

Finally, I would like to thank the people involved in the organisation of the conference: the EUROCALL Executive Committee for their advice and assistance, the Programme Committee, chaired by Ana Gimeno-Sanz and the Local Organising Committee for their invaluable work which made the conference a highly professional and memorable event.