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BOOK REVIEW

Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Global South: Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for Students and Teachers

Reviewed by

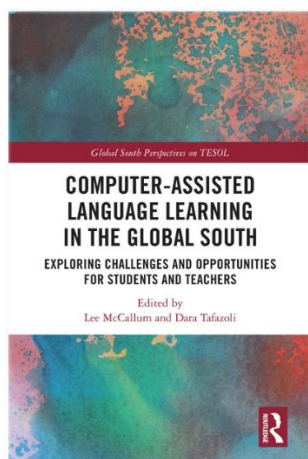
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*Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Global South:
Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for Students and
Teachers*

Edited by Lee McCallum and Dara Tafazoli

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Introduction

In recent decades, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has evolved into a dynamic area of language education research. Nevertheless, a notable gap persists in the literature: the Global South's perspectives, challenges, and innovations remain underrepresented. Here, the "Global South" is not merely a terrain and warrants a definition because it foregrounds the volume's value. Global South refers to historically marginalised regions such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where eduscape is affected by postcolonial legacies and systemic inequalities, in contrast to the Global North. *"Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Global South: Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for Students and Teachers,"* edited by Lee McCallum and Dara Tafazoli (2025), is a timely contribution to the field of technology-enhanced language learning in the Global South. The volume serves the Global South Perspectives on TESOL series by contributing to the series' vision of decolonising epistemologies, theories, and praxis in TESOL by introducing critical reflections on topics "outside the dominance of Western/Northern models," as the series editor Osman Z. Barnawi states. The volume aims to bring diverse empirical, conceptual, and reflective interpretations, critically examining challenges, opportunities, and possibilities of CALL from the Global South, filling this significant gap in CALL literature. Collectively, the chapters in the volume challenge the homogeneity of CALL research and pedagogy, urging scholars and practitioners to rethink dominant paradigms through a decolonial, context-responsive lens.

CALL research has long been dominated by Northern, Anglophone, and well-resourced settings (Demeter, 2020). The book disrupts this disequilibrium by focusing on researchers'/educators' perspectives, experiences, and insights embedded in linguistically, technologically, and economically diverse environments from the Global South. It emphasises "Southern epistemologies," in contrast to Eurocentric epistemologies that traditionally dominated academia, aligning with recent developments in applied linguistics that call for inclusive, decolonial, and pluralistic approaches to knowledge production, emphasising local knowledge systems, decolonial perspectives, and plurality of knowledge. The volume addresses Canagarajah's (2005) call for "a pedagogy of negotiation" by situating theory and practice within local educational ecologies. Its empirical depth and contextual diversity are other important factors. Many chapters in the volume offer grounded empirical insights into how CALL is enacted, challenged, and adapted across varying contexts in the Global South.

Summary of contents

The volume is divided into four thematic parts: Challenges and opportunities (i) in CALL implementation, (ii) of innovative technologies, (iii) in CALL leadership and professional development of pedagogical approaches, and (iv) Conclusion and future directions. It contains 12 chapters, including contributions by authors from Iran, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam, Chile, Colombia, and Thailand. The first four chapters comprise Part I. In Chapter 1, "Key barriers to and enablers of integrating technology into online language teaching", Dara Tafazoli provides a rich phenomenological exploration of language teachers' experiences during incidental remote teaching triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran. Through in-depth interviews with 12 foreign language instructors, Tafazoli reveals multi-layered barriers at individual, institutional, and national levels. For instance, the lack of digital literacy of individuals, the lack of infrastructure at institutions, and unequal access to the internet nationally together mould CALL experiences in Iran, similar to other developing countries. He also acknowledges positivity emerging from restraints by presenting teacher resilience and community support as enablers that keep things moving amidst challenges and presents a nuanced narrative of constraints and agency.

Mufeeda Irshad describes how long-established norms in ESL pedagogy came into tension with incidental digital transitions through a reflective account from Sri Lanka in Chapter 2, "Challenges in integrating computer-assisted language learning". She explores the contextual and pedagogical challenges associated with implementing CALL in a tertiary-

level English as a second language course within the framework of Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Mishra, 2019). Irshad's analysis points to how institutional inertia, inadequate training, and sociocultural attitudes inhibit the sustainability of CALL initiatives in Sri Lanka. Her emphasis on "pedagogical transformation through contextual realism" adds conceptual depth. This pushes readers to reconsider how CALL must be recalibrated for systemic change rather than episodic disruption in Sri Lanka and other countries in the Global South. The chapter reveals the layered nature of resistance and adaptation in traditional ESL programmes. These insider perspectives uncover challenges and propose context-sensitive strategies, bridging theory and praxis.

In Chapter 3, "Navigating slow internet connection in English language classrooms", Af'idatul Husniyah illustrates how Indonesian language classrooms struggle with unstable internet connectivity and how the barriers are negotiated at the grassroots level, through teacher creativity and community networking. The examples of classroom practice reveal that CALL in the Global South is not merely a story of deficiency but innovation under constraint, illustrating teacher agency.

In Chapter 4, "Integrating multimodal resources in multilingual and multicultural classrooms in Chile", Leonardo Veliz and Mical Polanco examine how language learning through a multimodal pedagogy brings inclusivity and socially just educational contexts in culturally and linguistically diverse Chile. Based on their qualitative analysis, the authors call for mobilising multimodal resources, including technology, to boost low-achieving language learners. Overall, the chapters in Part One go beyond surface-level critique and provide contextually grounded recommendations.

Part II, "Challenges and opportunities of innovative technologies", breaks important ground by critically analysing resources such as artificial intelligence (AI), social media, Metaverse environments, and Massive Open Online Courses (LMOOCs). The chapters highlight that the Global South is an active site of adaptation, critique, and experimentation, not just a passive recipient of technology trends. Cristina A. Huertas Abril and Tú Anh Hà, in Chapter 5 entitled "Opportunities and challenges of using artificial intelligence in language education," present a nuanced picture of AI in Vietnamese language education, balancing optimism with caution. Their concern about the risks of pedagogical over-dependence and data privacy is timely and relevant. Reviewing the opportunities and challenges of AI-assisted language learning (AIAL), the chapter interrogates AI's ethical and pedagogical implications in low-resource contexts. Despite its benefits, such as personalisation and interactivity, the authors caution against potential biases, infrastructural exclusions, and data privacy breaches. This objective analysis sets a simulation for critical CALL studies that move beyond technological optimism.

Chapter 6, "A living systematic review of the use of Metaverse in L2 English education", is similarly insightful. In this chapter, Isa W. S. Chan and Esther K. M. Tong systematically review 18 research articles on Metaverse applications in L2 English education in the Global South. The chapter suggests that while immersive technologies promise to revolutionise language learning, their implementation in low-resourced, underprivileged contexts remains uneven, mainly due to high entry costs and bandwidth issues. Nonetheless, the chapter shows pilot studies where Metaverse-based language tasks have promoted learner motivation and multimodal engagement.

Chapter 7, entitled "Unravelling Indonesian EFL students' reluctance to use social media for speaking activities," by Putu Indra Kusuma, focuses on social media-assisted language learning (SMALL). Employing a phenomenological approach and using inductive thematic analysis of data elicited from EFL tertiary level students specialising in English education through interviews, the author discusses the reasons for such reluctance, namely, fear of negative evaluation and low self-confidence hindering English language learning, stressing the need to address socio-emotional factors by creating safe and engaging language learning environments. In Chapter 8, "Bridging the gaps in language learning through language massive open online courses (MOOCs) in the Global South,"

Jitpaisarnwattana and Conde Gafaro analyse the integration of LMOOCs as an alternative approach in Thailand and Colombia. They suggest a model of interregional collaboration showing how open educational resources (OERs) can bridge access gaps in language education. The chapter reviews the feasibility of using LMOOCs as a remedy for challenges in language learning, finally calling for culturally sensitive LMOOC models to reinforce the localisation of digital pedagogies.

"Challenges and opportunities in CALL leadership and professional development of pedagogical approaches", Part III of the volume, moves beyond individual classrooms to explore institutional leadership, policy, and teacher professional development. The chapters in this part are critical because they examine the frequently overlooked meso and macro-level factors mediating technology implementation. For instance, in Chapter 9, "Making the case for micro-level leadership in CALL integration in Vietnam", Quang Vinh Nguyen, Paul Moore, and Hong Giang Nguyen argue for micro-level leadership in CALL integration, showing how change often begins at grassroots-level classrooms rather than ministries. They examine micro-level leadership in Vietnam and argue for bottom-up approaches to CALL advocacy. They criticise one-size-fits-all ICT training programmes and emphasise the value of contextually embedded leadership and change management.

Chapter 10, "Continuing professional development for CALL teacher trainers in Vietnam" by Doan Vo, Thanh Nguyen, Ho Minh, and Vu Nguyen discusses the gap between CALL policy and praxis in Vietnamese teacher training. Using a mixed-methods approach, they establish that implementation suffers owing to unclear guidelines, lack of resources, and minimal institutional assistance, despite progressive policies. The insights from this chapter are necessary for policy-practice disjunctions in education and reform. In the final chapter in this section, Chapter 11 entitled "Transforming and empowering Global South teacher education", Christine Sabieh discusses transformational CALL leadership, drawing on experiences from the Middle East and North America (MENA region). She provides a practical model for professional development that blends mentoring, resource-sharing, and community-based learning. This chapter calls for action, insisting that teacher educators become change agents, not just passive recipients of technological directives.

Part IV comprises one chapter, Chapter 12. In this critical and forward-looking concluding chapter, the editors, Lee McCallum and Dara Tafazoli, synthesise key insights and project a clear vision for the future. The editors efficiently combine the volume's themes and argue for the sustained prioritisation of Global South research in CALL. They stress the need to move forward away from a deficit model of CALL in the Global South and advocate context-sensitive approaches that foreground indigenous knowledge systems. This aligns with broader efforts to decolonise language education research and diversify global academic discourse. The editors highlight three key imperatives: diversifying research voices; documenting ongoing innovations in low-resource contexts; and fostering equitable North-South research collaborations. Their vision is grounded, yet optimistic, arguing that CALL's future lies in inclusive and justice-oriented educational paradigms.

Evaluation

The volume has numerous strengths. It is theoretically ambitious, methodologically diverse, and pedagogically insightful. Another strength is that it has encouraged several contributions by early-career researchers and/or practitioners whose voices are not often heard in mainstream publications such as this one. It is commendable that the thematic consistency and editorial framing maintain coherence across chapters. The empirical data in many chapters from various contexts through diverse perspectives enrich the volume's depth and broader insights into CALL in the Global South. Overall, the volume's focus on the Global South, mostly underrepresented in the Eurocentric CALL arena, is undoubtedly a significant plus point that strengthens the book. Nevertheless, the volume has a few limitations, though they do not significantly undermine its overall impact, especially as many of them are explicitly acknowledged throughout. One such drawback is the underrepresentation of some parts of the Global South. Given the broad scope denoted in the title, 'Global South,' one can claim that readers might reasonably expect greater regional balance that could have been maintained by inclusion of voices from sub-Saharan

Africa and some parts of South Asia. Yet, the editors have to be totally dependent on who submits an abstract and gets through the review process. Hence, this imbalance is unavoidable. Future volumes may consider the absence of language assessment in CALL and other technologies. In terms of stakeholder perspectives, it would also have been good to see more empirical data representing student voices directly explored in the volume. From a policy standpoint, a forthcoming volume could focus on detailed reform strategies, closer alignment between classroom praxis and national policy, informed by case-based evidence, which may provide practical benefits.

Conclusion

This edited volume attempts to redefine the landscape of CALL by looking at it through the Global South perspectives. By careful compilation, McCallum and Tafazoli create a space where Global South scholars participate in CALL discourses and lead them through this edited volume. Perhaps the most significant contribution is reframing CALL as a globally diverse and context-dependent field. In summary, *Computer-Assisted Language Learning in the Global South* is a breakthrough publication that attempts to offer a vision for how CALL is theorised and put into practice in coming years. Its critical orientation and ethical commitment, supported by empirical data, make the volume an essential reading for TESOL scholars, teacher educators, policymakers, and graduate students in TESOL, applied linguistics, and educational technology. By amplifying voices from the Global South, the volume expands the boundaries of CALL and models what a decolonial, inclusive, and context-responsive research agenda could look like. I highly recommend this book for institutional libraries, graduate/postgraduate programmes, and international agencies interested in equitable and transformative education.

Ethical statement

I confirm that the work contains no material from other works protected by copyright. I further declare that the review submitted for publication has not been previously published and is not currently under review elsewhere. I hereby confirm that I am submitting my original work, that I have the rights in the work, and that I am submitting the work for first publication in *The EuroCALL Review*. I declare that AI (ChatGPT) was used to check grammar, and I am accountable for any publication ethics violations. I neither have competing interests to disclose nor any funds being utilised for this work. Furthermore, no human participants were involved in this work.

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