REVIEW OF *TIPS FOR TEACHING WITH CALL: PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING*

Tips for Teaching with CALL: Practical Approaches to Computer-Assisted Language Learning [with CD]

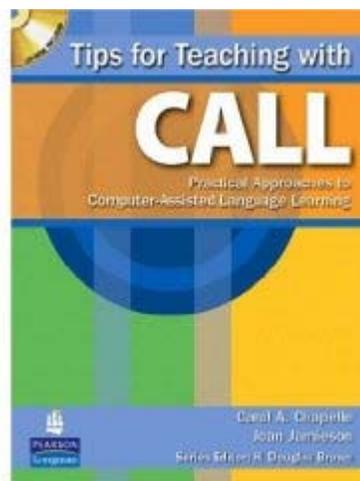Carol A. Chapelle and Joan Jamieson

2008
ISBN 0132404281
US $52.00 (paperback)
240 pp.

Pearson-Longman
White Plains, NY, USA

Review by Jesús García Laborda, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

Tips for Teaching with CALL: Practical Approaches to Computer-Assisted Language Learning [with CD] is one of the latest additions to Pearson-Longman's professional development series. Since the mid-1980s, a number of publications have tried to introduce, teach, support, and provide ideas to foreign language instructors on the use of computers in the classroom (Hardisty & Windeatt, 1989). Some of these volumes are intended to encourage language teachers to use computers (Axtell, 2007; Gooden, 1996; Szendeffy, 2005) while others suggest specific ways of implementing Internet-based language teaching (e.g., Clarke, 2000; Griffin, 2006; Lee, Jor, & Lai, 2005; Sperling, 1998; Windeatt, Hardisty, & Eastment, 2000). In contrast to these titles, *Tips for Teaching with CALL* largely deals with Web sites that could be valuable for ESL/EFL teachers who are either beginning to implement CALL in their classes or who want to improve their teaching skills through computer based practice. In this sense, the book bears a certain resemblance to Sperling's (1998) volume on Internet-based CALL, but, in contrast, Chapelle and Jamieson's book also includes screenshots of the Web sites mentioned by the authors, and the authors relate the use of these Web sites to current language acquisition theory. Overall, the book will mostly benefit general practitioners, teachers who may be familiar with computers but are just beginning to use CALL in their classes, and expert teachers who may be looking for new materials.

For Chapelle and Jamieson, teachers play a decisive role in providing opportunities for learning and balancing online, in-class, and out-of-class activities. The authors also believe in the value of Internet-based resources, such as dictionaries, tutorials, and online libraries (Loucky, 2005). In their opinion, Web sites and technology "perform functions similar to what many teachers do in class and through textbooks" (p. 6) in serving as teaching tools and providing opportunities for language learning, and multimedia software is an excellent source of input at each student's proficiency level.

Chapelle and Jamieson place special emphasis on the following ideas: (1) language learners should proceed steadily by learning structures and vocabulary that is just a little above their current knowledge (cf. Krashen, 1982); (2) language needs to be noticed in order to be learned (Hegelheimer & Chapelle, 2000); (3) interaction with peers is essential to developing learners' communicative competence; and (4) learning strategies are necessary for language learning (Vinther, 2005). Besides, according to the authors, "teachers can guide students to be more autonomous" (p. 207).

Tips for Teaching with CALL consists of a book and an interactive CD-ROM. While the book presents

the content, "tips and their rationale and examples" (p. 9), the CD provides examples of what is presented in the book. The book is divided into eight chapters with corresponding units on the CD, plus a preface, an introduction titled "What is CALL?" and a conclusion called "After Class." The topics addressed in the chapters focus on the following language skills and content areas: vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking, communication skills, and Content-Based Language. Each chapter follows exactly the same structure: an introduction, between five and six teaching tips to develop the activities suggested in each section of the chapter, a description of the intended outcomes of the chapter called "What It Means," a research review that links practical cases to research literature called "What the Literature Says," and suggestions for the utilization of the content in the classroom "What Teachers Can Do." The chapters are illustrated with color screenshots of existing CALL software programs, along with descriptions, the minimum proficiency level of the students for whom each activity is designed, and notes for implementing the activity, with a total of more than 100 examples of Web sites and software programs across the eight chapters. The authors also mention how students will need to interact with the computer and other students in each activity, how teachers should proceed with the ELT/ESL pedagogical assessment and feedback provision, and finally, how they can teach and reinforce both language learning and strategic computer competence.

The CD-ROM uses images and video clips to illustrate the contents of the book through demonstrations of learners using CALL software and simulations that guide them through authentic CALL materials. According to the authors, the demonstration "is a real-time video that shows how a learner might perform an activity" (p. 9), while the simulation "guides teachers through an activity as if they were students" (p. 9). Both demonstrations and simulations are divided into the same units (or chapters) as presented in the book (Figure 1).
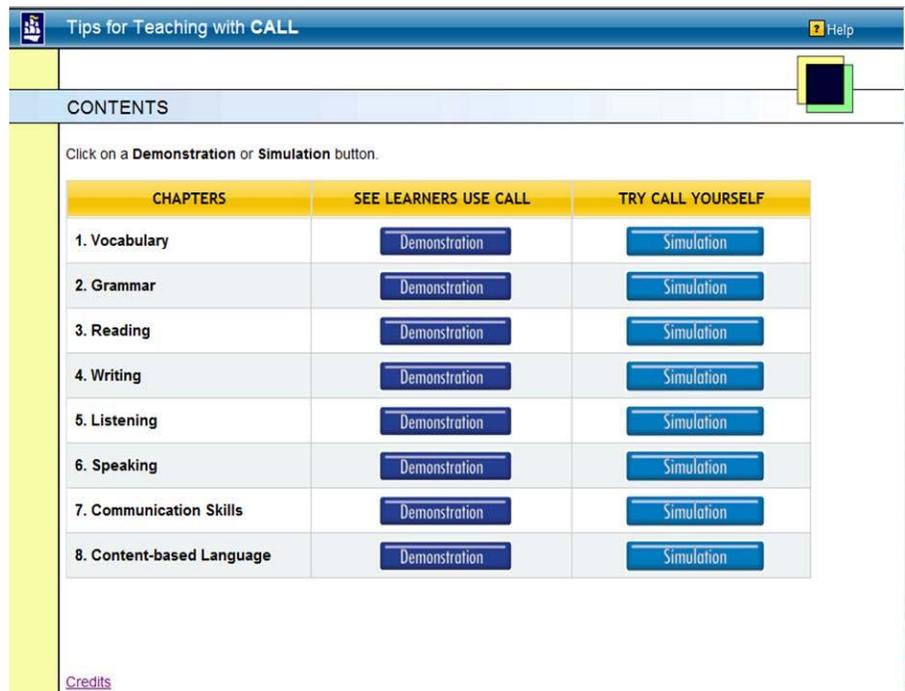

Figure 1: CD ROM main menu

The CD can be motivating and helpful for teachers who may want to see applications of what has been presented in the book. Each activity on the CD is connected with the tips presented in the book (either

through a demonstration or simulation) and has three main parts: goals and instructions for an activity, the activity itself, and a summary and description of the purpose of the activity.

The book begins with a nine-page introduction that provides a definition of CALL, a basic notion of language learning theory emphasizing the importance of the communicative approach in CALL, and the role of computers in ELT/ESL pedagogy. In addition, the authors introduce three basic principles of language that guide their selection of activities in the book:

a)   Learners need guidance in learning English.

b)   There are many styles of English used for many different purposes.

c)   Teachers should provide guidance by selecting appropriate language and structuring learning activities. (p. 3)

A fourth principle, although not explicitly mentioned is that computers trigger communication between teachers and students and among students by providing appropriate input, especially in listening, reading, and vocabulary, and by facilitating oral communication.

Chapter one focuses on vocabulary, which, in the authors' words, "is the most important aspect of language for students to learn" (p. 11), and that it is worth "spend[ing] time and effort studying vocabulary" (p. 11). According to Chapelle and Jamieson, the Internet gives "sufficient exposure to words in English that [students] hear or read" (p. 11). In the section "Tips for teaching vocabulary with CALL," Chapelle and Jamieson stress that vocabulary is best taught when words have the appropriate level of difficulty, which can be identified by examining a word's frequency, but missing for the reader are other criteria to support this condition. The authors remind readers of "including vocabulary illustration, explanation and practice…in [a] meaningful context" (p. 17), "looking at sentences from a corpus that contains key words" (p. 24), and using Web sites that can promote autonomous learning. Additionally, the CD ROM demonstrates how to foster communication among learners while building vocabulary skills. For instance, in the demonstration, two learners help each other to solve a puzzle. The CD reproduces the conversation between two students and shows how they solve the vocabulary task. The simulation section shows how the learners implement Tip Number Six ("Help students to develop strategies for explicit online vocabulary learning through the use of online dictionaries and concordancers" by using *Compleat Lexical Tutor* (http://www.lextutor.ca/). This chapter offers some motivating activities to approach vocabulary learning. While some of these interesting activities (such as crosswords or image identification) rarely take place in the classroom, students may do them individually through the Web sites presented in this chapter. This chapter clearly supports the importance of lexis in language learning. The authors even mention that "vocabulary is the most important aspect of language for students to learn" (p. 11) but they do not clearly establish whether computer based vocabulary learning is an explicit or implicit process or just even why they consider such importance. Readers will see that although Chapelle and Jamieson believe that "most students believe that they need to study vocabulary" (p. 11), little support is given to demonstrate this idea or even the implications of learning vocabulary through CALL. Nevertheless, this chapter is potentially key for understanding the rest of the book because the authors go on to emphasize the importance of vocabulary teaching in the following chapters.

Chapter two deals with grammar and follows the same structure as Chapter One. Although many teachers and students consider grammar important, the authors recommend "not to plan a syllabus around grammatical points" (p. 39). When presenting their tips, Chapelle and Jamieson assert that grammar activities presented on many Web sites are numerous, but many "are rather limited, as context is often at sentence level and practice is often in the form of recognition [instead of meaningful production]" (p. 41). They recommend CALL software with discourse-level activities, such as listening "to a part of a dialogue and then producing the target form orally" (p. 43). Chapter Two also includes suggestions for using

cartoons or movies for grammar learning which are available online. For example, a very attractive exercise suggested in the CD Rom is completing sentences with *Understanding and Using Grammar-Interactive* (http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/multimedia/programs/uuegi.htm), but the program offers a larger variety of grammar exercises. Additionally, the authors give examples of Web-based activities that provide "grammar assessment and feedback about correctness both before and after instruction" (p. 53), as well as ideas for developing students' learning strategies. The CD-Rom demonstrates Tip Four, "Include evaluation of students' regular responses and regular summaries of their responses," by using *Understanding and Using English Grammar – Interactive software* (http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/multimedia/programs/uuegi.htm). In this demonstration, a learner completes a grammar test, looks at the scores, and accesses a tutorial with grammar explanations. In the simulation of Tip Five, "Help learners to develop strategies for learning grammar from texts on the Web through explicit grammar and inductive learning," students can learn how to search for a structure in an online corpus, compare its distribution across genres, and see example sentences in the View Web site (http://view.byu.edu/).

Chapter three, focusing on reading, begins by stating that reading is difficult for "unskilled" (p. 63) learners, so it is important to familiarize students with the different contexts, genres, and texts that they are likely to read on the Internet. One of the most obvious, yet important, tips is for teachers to choose appropriate Web sites and reading texts (a few examples are provided), emphasize the vocabulary, and help students to understand the salient lexical and grammatical forms in online texts. Chapelle and Jamieson also stress the importance of using online support resources, such as glossaries, corpora, tutorials, and dictionaries. Finally, the authors add that "explicit teaching is better than simply letting the students sink or swim in their own reading" (p. 79), a criticism of those approaches that emphasize textual input alone may be sufficient to learn a language (e.g., Krashen, 2006). The CD-ROM demonstrates Tip Six, "Include evaluation of learners' comprehension and language knowledge," with *Longman English Interactive 3* (www.esl.net/englishinteractive_34.html*)* by showing how a learner completes a reading quiz, submits responses, and checks the score. In the simulation of Tip One, "Select CALL materials with appropriate reading texts," with *Adult Learning Activities* (www.cdlponline.org/)*,* the user chooses a reading topic and a story, looks at two versions of the story, and tries a variety of grammar learning activities, games, writing short answers and so on. One of the positive aspects of this chapter is that many of the described activities might have been difficult for teachers to design on their own. One of the aspects that Chapelle and Jamieson fail to give the relevant importance in this chapter is to the use of real materials. Certainly, it is not difficult to understand the importance of free reading in language learning—and the Internet is an abundant source of reading input that usually may or may not require direct instruction, which appears to be the key aspect of teaching and learning in this chapter. As the authors say: "Call activities make it easy to find texts that are at the appropriate level of difficulty" (p. 65). Perhaps it is the texts that make the CALL activities valid and valuable for learning.

Chapter four deals with writing. It emphasizes how important writing has become in our daily lives for professional and non-professional communication, for example, through e-mail. The chapter presents a list of software and online programs that help students write and contextualize their work according to genre, purpose, and audience. The CD-ROM demonstration addresses Tip Six, "Help learners to develop their writing strategies," using the *Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment (DIWE 7)* (www.daedalus.com)*,* in which a learner chooses a topic to write about, answers questions about the topic, and begins an essay with a pre-writing activity. The simulation on the CD-Rom of Tip One asks a student to "select appropriate writing texts as models" with WriteFix (www.writefix.com/), explores arguments for an essay, examines organization and paragraphing, and "look[s] at a complete model essay for transition words or phrases"(CD-ROM). A positive aspect of this chapter is the presentation of Web sites that can assist learners in the process of editing and monitoring their writing. Overall, this may be one of the most useful chapters in the book because these Web sites can make students more aware of the

importance of editing and monitoring their own language production.

Chapter five deals with listening. The authors see listening as a constructive process that "involves decoding, comprehension and interpretation" (p. 125) and requires the speaker's attention and knowledge to achieve understanding in real time. According to the authors, to select appropriate listening materials, teachers should look for those that have "already been categorized by level [and that have] relevance to the ESL learner, and that [have] pre-listening activities intended to activate [the] student's background knowledge" (p. 127), as well as top-down and bottom-up activities. Teachers should also help students to develop autonomy in choosing materials themselves. The authors recommend using videos to enrich listening activities and provide examples to help improve the quality of teaching listening. On the CD-Rom, Tip Three suggests teachers "[p]rovide learners with opportunities for selective listening activities based on what they are hearing," and offers a demonstration of *Planet English* (http://www.planetenglish.com/ in which a student reads the instructions for a listening activity while paying attention to a specific piece of information, and then writes a personal note using that information. The simulation shows a cultural activity from *Longman English Interactive 3* (http://www.esl.net/englishinteractive_34.html) video and writing a personal note. In this chapter, Chapelle and Jamieson present resources, most of them free that can be accessed by teachers worldwide making this chapter an excellent resource for teachers in multinational environments. This chapter is valuable for many teachers who may struggle to find listening materials, although podcasts are increasingly becoming a common source of different recordings with different accents and registers. In this sense the section "help learners develop their strategies for listening online" (p. 145) gives some ideas that teachers should emphasize in their classes.

Chapter six deals with speaking and pronunciation. Chapelle and Jamieson state that the Internet is a convenient tool for obtaining speaking and pronunciation input because language learners can use it autonomously. The authors also suggest that the Internet makes students more confident about their speaking skills because practice is not subject to in-classroom anxiety from which some less confident students may suffer. Computers can also be used to complete dialogues, thereby possibly increasing fluency because "automaticity of oral language [will develop] through oral practice" (p. 159) and interaction with the computer. In the evaluation section, Chapelle and Jamieson recommend "software that provides visual feedback that plots the learner's speech signal on the screen" (p. 162).   Using *Tell Me More* (www.tellmemore.com/) for the demonstration of Tip 3, "Provide opportunities for oral practice through interaction with the computer," a student simulates a chat with a computer program (with answer recognition). More interesting practice is presented in Tip Four, "Evaluate learners' performance and provide feedback" (*Connected Speech*, http://www.masterspokenenglish.com/index.html); in this software program for phonology development, the user listens to a video monologue, segments the pauses in a text, checks the answers, records his/her voice, and obtains feedback from the computer. In short, teachers who want to place special emphasis on pronunciation, or those non-native speakers who feel that that their speech is not a good source of accurate pronunciation input, may find excellent ideas on the teaching of pronunciation, which often tends to be neglected. The main problem with pronunciation, which is not mentioned by the authors, is that the current software tends to adopt one accent at the time (say, British, American, or Australian). Certainly pronunciation can be improved through listening, but this was not addressed by the authors at all. A key concern is that the authors fail to recognize that there is still some empirical work necessary to be done in the area of pronunciation before we can make assumptions regarding the productive potential of CALL applications to improve pronunciation. On the other hand, the authors propose the interesting idea that using CALL to obtain "formulaic sequences" (p. 159) can become a valuable drive to memorize chains of words that eventually become a part of the learner's speaking repertoire. In this sense, it is relevant to mention their support of using computers to trigger the speaker's "automaticity" (p. 159), which is relevant to speaking as it is to the communication skills referred to in the following chapter.

Chapter seven, focusing on communication skills, conveys that "technology is an important part of normal communication for students" today (p. 171), and those students learn to communicate through communicating. Among the pros of Internet communication, the authors consider the ability to speak to people in distant locations, which can give students extra motivation. The authors see the challenge for teachers to design activities that promote both synchronous and asynchronous communication and reflective conversations that go beyond mere social interaction. Chapelle and Jamieson suggest that pen pal Web sites, messenger forums, or chat spaces can fulfill this goal, supported by online tutorials, dictionaries, and other resources. The CD-Rom demonstration presents online chat (using *Microsoft Windows Live Player*) while the practice-yourself section deals with how to contact and work with e-pals (online pen pals) through Web sites like *Linguistic Funland TESL Pen Pal Center* (www.linguistic-funland.com). This chapter provides good examples of effective use of synchronous and asynchronous communication devices and software to develop the students' communication abilities in controlled classroom environments.

The final chapter addresses expected learning outcomes when CALL is used as an additional component to enhance language teaching. According to Chapelle and Jamieson "students who have experienced the CALL activities described […] while studying English are likely to develop the types of strategies and habits […] demonstrated [in this book]" (p. 212). Chapter Eight also addresses possible risks of using the Internet, such as plagiarism, criminal uses of the Web, technical problems with equipment and software, and varying levels of teacher familiarity with computers. In addition, this chapter also reviews the benefits of using the Internet as a source of readings, podcasts, and contextualized materials to obtain specific information for teaching languages for the professions, as well as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This approach to online materials can be seen on the CD-ROM. The CD-ROM demonstration for Chapter Eight provides an example of an activity "that explicitly teach[es] field-specific language [in this case, medicine]" (Tip Two): a cartoon of a doctor-patient interaction at *Englishmed.com* (www.englishmed.com/). In the CD simulation, the user listens to a conversation between two business people, fills in a sales chart, and consults the conversation transcript and a glossary, followed by a cloze test activity using *Talking Business Intermediate* (http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/multimedia/programs/TB.htm).

Chapelle and Jamieson have written a reader-friendly volume that is free of technical jargon that is accessible to most teachers. The book is a well planned source of teaching ideas,with a well defined structure and plan for class implementation. The best aspect of the book is the variety of activities for teachers to choose from. Although the book has numerous valuable attributes, it also suffers from some shortcomings. For instance, the authors might have included a section on language assessment and free language tests, such as TOEFL (http://toeflpractice.ets.org/) or some others (e.g., http://www.examenglish.com). It would also have been useful to refer readers to free online journals, such as *TESL EJ* (http://tesl-ej.org/), *The Internet TESL Journal* (http://iteslj.org/), *CALL EJ* (http://www.tell.is.ritsumei.ac.jp/callejonline/), or *Language Learning & Technology* (http://llt.msu.edu/) *for additional teaching* ideas. Another potential weak point is that 65% of the websites referred to charge a user fee. Consequently, although the book is a great source of ideas, many teachers may have to browse free websites like *Isabel's ESL Site* (http://www.isabelperez.com/) or *About.com* (http://esl.about.com) to find similar sources. However, although the emphasis on commercial websites is a flaw, the authors do emphasize that it is important for teachers to find, select, and adapt appropriate materials for their students (Doering, 2006). Finally, it is important to note that all the materials mentioned in the book are designed for teaching ESL. There is no mention of materials for the teaching of any other languages. All in all, Chapelle and Jamieson's volume combines SLA and teaching with Internet activities. The book is an valuable contribution to the field and will be a useful resource for both novice and expert teachers.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Jesús García Laborda received his Ph.D. in English Linguistics from Complutense University (Madrid, Spain), an M.A. in TESOL from the University of Georgia, and an M.A.F.L.L. from the University of Wisconsin. His research interests include low-stakes computer based language testing. He has reviewed materials for *TESOL Quarterly*, *Educational Technology and Society, Language Teaching Research, ELT Journal*, and *ESP Journal*.

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Computers have been used for teaching languages since the 1960s. With the invention of the personal computer, the PC, in the 1980s and subsequently the development of the World Wide Web or WWW, computer use in language learning has grown very quickly. Throughout the period there have been a number of discussions and debates regarding the benefits and barriers associated with its use, the use of technology in general in language learning, and the application of CALL in modern language pedagogy. Call is firmly entrenched in today's language learning arena and will be for the foreseeable future. However, there are several cautions to be observed and it is important to remember CALL is not a one stop solution. Review by Jesús García Laborda, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. Tips for Teaching with CALL: Practical Approaches to Computer-Assisted Language Learning [with CD] is one of the latest additions to Pearson-Longman's professional development series. Since the mid-1980s, a number of publications have tried to introduce, teach, support, and provide ideas to foreign language instructors on the use of computers in the classroom (Hardisty & Windeatt, 1989). Some of these volumes are intended to encourage

Computer assisted learning is the future, and that future is now. Education, as a process and discipline, is mainly concerned with imparting knowledge, methods of teaching, and providing/maintaining a conductive learning environment as opposed to informal education and other means of socialization. Computer assisted learning (CAL), as the name implies, is the use of electronic devices/computers to provide educational instruction and to learn. The impediments associated with computer assisted learning are not related to the computer programs, but how to teach with them. The snag with CAL is chiefly the low-level pedagogic (methods and activities of teaching) strategies of teaching/learning with ICT systems. Whichever method of computer assisted language learning you choose, it is important to practice as much as possible, and to use any other methods possible to complement your learning. Get Vocabulary, Grammar and Teaching Tips, Site Updates and Special Offers Directly to Your Mailbox. Join our mailing list now and get a special bonus: First 2 chapters of the English Short Stories Book and Workbook.