

Expert Views on How Language Education May Develop in the Next 20 Years and What CALL Could Contribute

Ton Koenraad¹

Abstract. The celebration of EUROCALL's twentieth anniversary also provides a proper occasion to reflect on the future of language teaching and the role of CALL in these developments. In this paper we present the views of five authorities on language teaching and learning from different EU countries. Most of them are also CALL experts and well respected EUROCALL members, including the late **Graham Davies**. Our presentation is based on a summary of the Skype interviews in which they contributed to a symposium entitled 'And now for another century of modern language teaching...' organised by the Dutch national Association of Language Teachers on the occasion of its first centennial in 2011. To provide a more global (or at least European) perspective the interviewees were asked to cover the same topics that were central to the live panel discussion by six Dutch participants representing a variety of perspectives: secondary and university teachers, students, curriculum experts and teacher educators. By way of preparation all involved had been given a number of challenging statements related to some aspects of the discussion theme: the characteristics of the future learning environment, teacher, learner, pedagogy and technology. In this audio-supported document we will focus on interesting points of view particularly related to pedagogy and technology expressed in the interviews. A video report summary of the live discussion (in Dutch) is available on the limited edition CD with recordings of the centennial festivities.

Keywords: CALL trends, future of MFL education, expert views, discussion, panel, educational trends watching.

1. TELLConsult, Vleuten, The Netherlands; ton.koenraad@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The Dutch national Association of Language Teachers (Levende Talen)² celebrated its first centennial on May 27, 2011. Part of the festivities was a symposium with the title: ‘...and now for another century of modern language teaching’.

The focus point of this symposium was a panel discussion. Six Dutch participants (teachers, pupils, curriculum experts and teacher educators) shared their views on the future of mainstream language learning/teaching. As food for thought they were given the following introduction and reflections to the theme.

In a 100 years’ time... will there still be thirty students in three rows in a classroom with a language teacher working their way through text- and workbooks during two or three weekly, fifty-minute periods? Or will the concept of classroom and form disappear and will school be more like a social meeting place? After all, learning can take place anywhere: in social networks, virtual learning environments, with the help of intelligent agents or a private teacher at a distance. On the other hand, we should take into account that changes in education have proven to be slow and that all our 2011 prophecies may well stand little to no chance to come true in the traditional classroom.

1. The future learning environment. What changes can be predicted about the ‘learning environment’? What implications are there for schools and school buildings?

2. The future teacher. Will subject teachers (f/m) and their task load of some 26 lessons per week disappear in the next one hundred years? And if so, who or what will replace them? Will they become merely coaches assisted by robots to transfer knowledge?

3. The future student. Pupils have changed in the course of time. Nowadays they are less willing to just consume educational content. They prefer to find information themselves but distinguish between personal and school-related learning.

4. Future methodologies. What are the current views on how languages are taught? Will didactics in mainstream language courses still be driven

2. Living Languages.

by textbooks produced by educational publishers? Or will web-based and interactive materials replace the traditional means?

5. Future technology. Technological developments are bound to continue the next one hundred years. How will this affect language learning and teaching? What technical developments will support future teachers and students in the second language acquisition process?

To provide a more global (or at least European) perspective five international experts were invited to be Skype interviewed individually and discuss the same topics that were central to the live panel debate.

The following colleagues accepted the request: **Jozef Colpaert** (Belgium), **Nicolas Guichon** (France), **Andreas Müller-Hartmann** (Germany), **Andreas Lund** (Norway) and **Graham Davies** (UK), who regrettably died a year later.

Below we summarize the key points of their opinions about the symposium topics. The present document has links to the original audio sequences for a number of statements. The extended version of this paper³ includes links to all the audio references and the complete summaries of all the interviews. Although the standard language was English, **Colpaert** and **Guichon** have been invited to use their mother tongues so as to also add a multi-lingual dimension to this venture.

2. The views of the international experts on the symposium topics

2.1. Learning in the future learning environment

Andreas Müller-Hartmann does not expect the learning environment to change dramatically in the short term as for societies, schools are the spaces where the training of the future potential workforce takes place. Because of this interest, states consequently want to have much influence and control over these institutions [**Müller-Hartmann**, 1].

Nicolas Guichon finds it difficult, possibly even dangerous to make predictions, but observes that technologies develop faster than the changes that take place in schools [**Guichon**, 1]. From his research on the integration of ICT in language

3. The extended, online version of this paper is available here: <http://www.koenraad.info/content/international-perspective-future-language-education>

teaching it appears that teachers understand the importance of ICT but it still takes them too much time to learn to use applications.

Graham Davies observes that the learning environment in the United Kingdom (UK) is developing rapidly [Davies, 1]. In particular the Web and the interactive whiteboard have contributed to these changes.

Andreas Lund concludes that the computer function to support (oral) communication is becoming more important in language education. He elaborates on *telecollaboration* [Lund, 1] and sketches the future development of this concept towards speech communities, in which the role of the teacher is increasingly of an organizing and coaching nature.

Jozef Colpaert starts off by saying that the order of the symposium propositions, with the learning environment as a starting point, is well chosen [Colpaert, 1]. Experience has shown that first the entire learning environment must be well defined before choices as to technological instrumentation can be made.

2.2. The future teacher

Davies [15] expects that teachers will increasingly be developing their own materials thanks to the availability of software tools and the related competencies developed in teacher education. Furthermore he expects participation in Personal Learning Networks (PLN) as a form of continuing professional development to contribute to the development of skills needed to manage the “open classroom” [Davies, 16].

Although Lund expects the book as such will survive, he [Lund, 6] doubts if textbooks, also in their hybrid form with media and Internet content supported components, are here to stay. This is in contrast to Müller-Hartmann [10], who on the other hand, despite the very vast supply of information the web offers, thinks that teachers will not become redundant. Youngsters can find lots of content but the teacher is still needed to support the process of meaning making. Related new teacher competences that Lund mentions include the ability to design learning environments, curriculum trajectories and communication activities based on an understanding of the effects of the choice of technologies to the learning and communication process.

Colpaert [2] considers it of great importance that teachers take pride in their work and are able to feel comfortable in their learning environment. He invites them to

actively participate in improvement of the quality of the learning environment in which they operate [Colpaert, 5.1].

Also Müller-Hartmann attaches great value to the teacher's comfort zone. He therefore calls for more attention in initial training and more time in professional development [Müller-Hartmann, 12] for familiarisation with, both personally and professionally, (technological) innovations such as the adoption of more learner- and task-oriented approaches and technology-enhanced telecollaboration [Müller-Hartmann, 14].

2.3. The future student

Davies [6] regrets that students in the UK after they have turned 14 are no longer obliged to expand their language skills. At the same time he endorses the suggestion that there is an extra demand on one's motivation to learn other languages if English is your first language [Davies, 7].

Müller-Hartmann, Lund and Guichon see an increase in informal learning because students use social media and so called web 2.0 applications. Studies by Guichon reveal that Facebook is very popular among grammar school students and their use also leads to (more) cooperation between pupils outside the school context [Guichon, 5].

2.4. Future language learning pedagogy

With regard to the possible influence of methodological innovations Guichon expects further growth of bilingual education in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) [Guichon, 7]. Although Davies [13] also views CLIL as a valid approach, he does not expect a wide implementation in the UK. Lund [9] and Müller-Hartmann [4] consider it a most relevant development mainly because of the emphasis on the content that it characterizes. Both Müller-Hartmann [8] and Lund [8] observe a growing influence of the task-oriented approach also in classroom practice and on the materials currently produced by the publishers.

According to Guichon and Lund, language teachers should not attempt to integrate informal learning that could take place with the help of web 2.0 applications in education [Guichon, 6]. On the other hand, because of the relevance of the related communication processes and development of new genres for the formal curriculum, the awareness levels within the professional community of these developments should be raised [Lund, 4].

Colpaert [7] does not expect significant short-term changes in language teaching methodologies. Like Lund, he hopes that insights from other disciplines will be better integrated in modern foreign languages (MFL) pedagogy [Colpaert, 8, 9].

2.5. Technology of the future

Both Guichon [9] and Davies [12] expect that mobile technologies will provide flexibility and interesting applications for language teaching. Like Lund [3] they think that communicative use of language will get a much more central place in the curriculum thanks to Web 2.0 applications – also because they can support social networking and telecollaboration. Müller-Hartmann shares this view but notes that for the realization of these developments at any scale a generation of adequately trained teachers is required.

Other relevant technologies mentioned are touch screens [Davies, 11] and translation tools, for example to support the development of intercultural understanding [Guichon, 10]. Colpaert [10], finally, sees a more limited impact of technological developments on language education as choices in this domain, also in the near future, represent “only” one aspect of the whole of the learning environment.

3. Conclusion

When we focus on the common aspects in the views of these five experts, a trend appears to emerge with a number of characteristics. Key elements of future modern language teaching and learning that are mentioned are the (oral) use of the target language for communication based on authentic content. The related schoolbased processes are teacher orchestrated and facilitated by information and communication technologies. The speed at which innovation will take place is expected to be largely dependent on the availability of teachers with the necessary competences and willingness to function in the related learning environment.

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Prof. Dr Jozef Colpaert teaches Instructional Design and Computer Assisted Language Learning at the University of Antwerp. He is vice-chairman of the Institute for

Education and Information Sciences (IOIW) and director R&D of LINGUAPOLIS, the Language Institute of the University of Antwerp. Homepage: <http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=jozef.colpaert>

Graham Davies (2012) was employed as a Lecturer in German at Ealing College (later integrated into Thames Valley University) from 1971 to 1990, and then as Director of the Multimedia Language Centre from 1990 to 1993. He had been involved in CALL since 1976. He was conferred with the title of Professor of Computer Assisted Language Learning in 1989 and the founder president of EUROCALL from 1993 to 2000. Homepage: <http://grahamdavies.wikispaces.com/>

Dr Nicolas Guichon is professor at Lyon 2 University in Language education. He is a member of ICAR research team (CNRS) and was the director of the Masters programme language education and CALL until 2012. Homepage: <http://nicolas.guichon.pagesperso-orange.fr/>

Dr Andreas Lund is Associate Professor at the Department of Teacher Education and School Research and Vice Dean at the Faculty of Education, University of Oslo, Norway. Homepage: <http://www.uv.uio.no/ils/english/people/aca/andlund/index.html>

Prof. Dr Andreas Müller-Hartmann is head of the English Department of the University of Education (Pädagogischen Hochschule) Heidelberg. Homepage: <http://www.ph-heidelberg.de/english/personen/lehrende/prof-dr-mueller-hartmann.html>

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