

Critical CALL

The 22nd EUROCALL conference was held at the University of Padova from the 26th to the 29th of August 2015, the first time that EUROCALL has been held in Italy. The event was organized in collaboration with the University Language Centre and the support of the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies. Over 300 delegates attended the conference and travelled from over 37 different countries to be with us.

The theme of the conference this year was Critical CALL, drawing inspiration from the work carried out in the broader field of Critical Applied Linguistics. The term ‘critical’ has many possible interpretations, and as Pennycook (2001)¹ outlines, has many concerns. It was from these that we decided on the conference theme, in particular the notion that we should question the assumptions that lie at the basis of our praxis, ideas that have become ‘naturalized’ and are not called into question. Another concern of Critical Applied Linguistics is the relationship between the macro and the micro, an engagement with issues of power and inequality and an understanding of how our classrooms and conversations are related to broader social, cultural and political relations.

Over 200 presentations were delivered in 68 different sessions, both in English and Italian, on topics related specifically to the theme and also more general CALL topics. 94 of these were submitted as extended papers and appear in this volume of proceedings.

Our keynote speakers, who came from both within and outside the sphere of CALL, contributed greatly to fostering a greater understanding of how we might conceptualize critical CALL, that is, critical approaches to the practice of and research on technology in foreign language education. A critical approach does not offer solutions, but it entails constant questioning of our assumptions, and this is precisely what our keynotes did.

The Graham Davies keynote speaker, Robert O’Dowd, offered a critical review of telecollaborative exchange in foreign language education. He asked questions about the effectiveness of telecollaboration in contributing to the goals of Foreign

1 Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: a critical introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Language Education, the adequacy of our practices to meet the needs and challenges of our time, such as social justice and multiethnic dialogue, and the adequacy of the constructs on which we have based our practice.

Sian Bayne took us through some of the trends and trajectories of digital education in the last decade and some of its perceived promises and threats. In particular she looked at plagiarism detection and ‘regimes of knowledge’, active algorithms and the bias in the aggregation of posts in a MOOC, and finally the notion of automated teaching with Teacherbots. She argued that by shifting from the question of ‘what works?’ in digital education to ‘what do we want digital education to do?’, we can keep our educational practice fresh, critical and challenging.

Lynn Mario T. Menezes de Souza called our attention to the situatedness of digital technology, which is not simply transferable and context-independent. He highlighted the need to situate technical innovation within a social and political context as he offered us a critical look at current digital media in education. Most importantly, he reminded us that technology is foundational in ‘making humanity human’, something we should not lose sight of as we reflect on our roles as teachers in an increasingly inhumane world.

Recordings of these keynote addresses, as well as the full program and session abstracts may be found at the conference website: www.eurocall2015.it.

We thank all of the participants of the EUROCALL 2015 conference, and the contributors to these proceedings which reflect the enormous variety of topics which were addressed at this exciting event and the quality of the presentations. We hope you enjoy reading the proceedings as much as we, the editors, have in the preparation of this volume.

Buona lettura!

Francesca Helm

Conference chair of EUROCALL2015

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