Meeting the technology standards
for language teachers

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Abstract. The starting point for this project was the question in how far a Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) module in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) course can bring the students up to the required level of being confident CALL users. The teachers' part of the TESOL Technology Standards Framework was chosen as evidence for the level of training required. Each standard was first matched against the components of an existing CALL module. Standards that were not met were then filtered for achievability in a pre-service teacher training situation. Next, all remaining standards were examined to find out whether they could be incorporated into the module, either by modification of an existing element or the introduction of new elements. A second step involved the evaluation of components of the CALL course that did not seem to contribute to helping the students reach any of the technology standards. One of the goals of this procedure was to give more structure to the process of regular updates of the module content, beyond simply updating the software used in the module, and to allow for a more principled improvement of the module over the years.

Keywords: teacher education, TESOL, technology standards framework, normalization of CALL.

1.   Introduction

While computers of various types are increasingly common in classrooms, CALL itself cannot be said to be entirely normalized yet, partly because many language teachers are reluctant to use much technology in their classes. The need for more systematic integration of CALL in teacher training has been pointed out by Hubbard (2008) and He, and Puakpong, and Lian (2015), amongst others. Hong (2010) states that the aim of such training is teachers knowing about and

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being confident with CALL in their classrooms, something that probably cannot be achieved with just a few workshops. Teachers, and also trainee teachers, vary widely not just in their knowledge of potential CALL tools, but also in their confidence and attitude towards them. O'Reilly (2016) attempts to address this kind of variation among teachers by a needs analysis in the form of a survey that includes a range of answers for a whole series of dimensions. If we only look at trainee teachers rather than in-service teachers, we might assume that these digital natives would be a more homogeneous group, but there is still considerable variation in their skills level.

2. Method

The starting point for this project was the question in how far a CALL module in an undergraduate TESOL/Applied Linguistics course (i.e. not an actual teacher training course) can bring the students up to the required level to give them the skills and the confidence to use CALL once they start teaching. A large proportion of the students go on to some form of teaching; some already have a CELTA. The module is based around a multimedia CALL project that the students create over the course of ten weeks, using either free or very commonly used software (mostly Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Forms, Hot Potatoes).

The *Technology Standards for Language Teachers* (part of the TESOL Technology Standards Framework, Healey et al., 2008) was chosen as evidence for the level of training required. The TESOL Technology Standards includes sets of standards for both learners and their teachers; here only the teachers' set was considered. The teacher standards are structured into a basic and an expert level and have further specifications for various teaching contexts, e.g. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), young learners,and high-tech or low-tech classrooms (cf. Kessler, 2016 for a discussion of this set of standards). In a first instance, each standard was matched against one or more components of an existing CALL module. Standards that were not met were then filtered for achievability in a pre-service teacher training situation, and those that were deemed not to be achievable or relevant in the given context were eliminated. All remaining standards were then examined to find out whether they could be incorporated into the module, either by modification of an existing element or the introduction of new elements. A second step involved the evaluation of components of the CALL course that did not seem to contribute to helping the students reach any of the technology standards. One of the goals of this procedure was to give more structure to the process of regular updates of the module content, beyond simply

updating the software used in the module, and to allow for a more principled improvement of the module over the years.

The given technological context was relatively high-resource and high-access; the course took place in a computer lab with internet access at a British university. Students also had access to networked PCs in the university library, and also typically their own laptops and smartphones. Resources going beyond this were limited however, and students would more likely use their mobile phones for recording their own video material than borrow a video camera. Table 1 gives an overview of the TESOL technology standards for teachers and whether each one was deemed to be met in the CALL module or not, followed by a brief comment. Only abbreviated titles are given for the individual goals; for the full version, along with examples and vignettes, see Healey at al. (2008).

Table 1. Overview of standards (E: expert level)

Goal 1	Foundational knowledge & skills	Met?	Comment
1.1	Basics	Yes	Students normally come to the course with this level of knowledge already present.
1.2	Understand the range	Yes	Students have at least a basic knowledge and can easily deal with the extra width and depth as covered in the course.
1.3	Expand the knowledge base	Yes	Some of this standard is met via the lectures and the reading material, some via the group assignment.
1.4	Culture and ethics	In part	Much of this is covered in other courses and is not particularly specific to CALL.
Goal 2	Integration		
2.1	Identify suitable technology	Yes	The assignment is used as a 'teaching context' and students choose from technology presented in class or found elsewhere.
2.2	Integrate technology	Yes	An undergraduate programme for pre-service teachers allows for limited coverage of this standard, mainly through the group assignment.
2.3	Design tasks using technology	Yes E: no	The assignment is the main element to meet this standard, albeit to a surprisingly limited extent. The expert level can only be said to be met on one element due to time restrictions.
2.4	Use research findings	In part E: no	In a pre-service environment, the principles can be covered via the readings. The expert level standard is not achievable.

Goal 3	Application in assessment		
3.1	Evaluate and implement	No	Students experience these technologies from the learners' perspective mainly.
3.2	Collect and analyse data	No	This is not achievable in a pre-service environment.
3.3	Evaluation	No	This is not achievable in a pre-service environment.
Goal 4	Technology for improvement		
4.1	Contact and collaboration	No	Some of the students' other courses cover some of these issues.
4.2	Reflection	No	This is not achievable in a pre-service environment.
4.3	Efficiency	No	This is not achievable in a pre-service environment.

3.   Discussion and conclusion

No elements of the course were found that did not contribute is some way to help the students reach one of the technology standards, but the balance of elements in the course could be changed to bring it more in line with the set of standards. On the whole, it was surprising to the module coordinator how few of these standards occur in a semester-long CALL course. For the next student cohort, standard 2.3 in particular should receive more attention; while students will happily try out a variety of tools, their critical evaluation of these tools is often quite superficial. One reason for this relatively low coverage is clearly the limited amount of time available; the notional 200 hours of work for a student for a module with 25 contact hours do not allow for much more than a taste of CALL.

The other important issue is the fact that the students by and large have no teaching experience and no simple access to learners, so a number of the standards are basically out of reach for them. While the standards are a useful element for curriculum planning, a further structuring into pre-service and in-service training could be helpful for teacher trainers in their endeavour to improve and update their courses. Kessler (2012) pointed out the need for teacher trainers to raise their language teacher trainees' awareness of the complexities of CALL tools, while also showing them the potential such technologies hold, in order to avoid early disappointment when something goes wrong. In addition to the TESOL standards, this may be a good general guideline to follow when updating a module on CALL.

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