Conference Report: EuroCALL 2006: Integrating CALL into Study Programmes

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Granada, Spain

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The University of Granada hosted a successful EuroCALL conference in Granada, Spain, during the first week of September. The venue was the University of Granada's College of Sciences, a modern facility with technology in the meeting rooms and a large auditorium for the plenary sessions; and the general theme was "Integrating CALL into Study Programmes." The program included papers (25-minute slots), short papers (two per half hour slot), Show and Tell (25 minutes), and posters. In all, there were almost 200 presentations divided into 14 strands: E-Learning, CMC, Skills: Listening & Speaking, Skills: Reading & Writing, Motivational Skills & Strategies, Corpora & Language Learning, Language Teacher Education, Language for Specific Purposes, Virtual Learning Environments, Miscellaneous, Mobile Phones, Natural Language Processing, Learning with the WWW, and Evaluation. Mobile phone technologies are attracting a great deal of interest and activity among European CALL folks, more than what I sense is happening here in the States; and blogging and podcasting were popular topics. In general, the conference was like those in the States in that there were more show-and-tell presentations than ones based in theory or empirical research findings. This conference usually has a small vendor exhibit area; this year it was particularly small with only three tables with vendors exhibiting their wares.

The excellent opening keynote address was presented by Diana Laurillard, from the Institute of Education, London (aka London Knowledge Lab), who is author of a book entitled "Rethinking University Teaching: A conversational framework for the effective use of learning technologies." Her address entitled "The next generation of CALL – What are we hoping for?" was focused largely on the conversational framework laid out in her book and how we can make innovation in teaching more like action research and, thus, foster integration of CALL methods for better learner support.

Other keynotes were presented by Michael Levy (Griffith University, Queensland, Australia), "The language, the goal and the context: Key factors for longer-term success in the development of CALL tasks & applications (which presented a case history of how CALL was implemented in the various languages at Griffith University); and by Anthony Baldry (University of Pavia, Italy) and Paul Thibault (University of Agder, Norway), "Multimodality and multimediality in the e-learning age: Integrating CALL into study programmes" (which discussed their research on multimodal text analysis to investigate construction of knowledge and meaning through networks of semiotic and cognitive processes). On the final day, all the keynoters plus Francoise Blin presented a panel moderated by EuroCALL President Ana Gimeno on "Integrating CALL into Study Programmes," during which the speakers presented briefly their views on the state of CALL. The picture presented was fairly negative—the predominant view being that we have a lot of catching up to do to come back up to speed with the rest of the academic world and haven't made enough significant progress in integrating CALL into language curricula. (The exception here was Michael Levy, who was more positive about the overall picture.) The audience was invited to make comments and many people took the opportunity to voice their opinions.

This year's conference featured a Virtual Strand that delivered recordings of all the plenary sessions (still available at http://www.eurocall2006.com/videos.htm), a conference blog written by conference participants and inviting discussion from virtual attendees, and a "blobber" (real-time text chat).

During the General Membership Meeting Ana Gimeno highlighted some of the recent changes in the EuroCALL organization, which is now hosted by the University of Limerick. She mentioned the new Virtual Strand for the 2006 Conference (described above); new national/regional representatives from Austria, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and several regional events; and the increase in the number of ReCALL issues published each year from 2 to 3. The organization offers an annual Research Award competition, which grants the winner a free conference registration and a year's free EuroCALL membership. EuroCALL currently supports 2 SIGs—Natural Language Processing and CorpusCALL—and they are open to proposals for formation of additional ones.

Next year's conference will be held September 5-8 in Coleraine, Northern Ireland and bids are open for hosting the 2008 conference. As usual, this timing makes it difficult for academics from the U.S. to participate.

The social events for the conference were superb, notably the opening

reception at the Hospital Real (a graceful building dating from the 16th century) and the gala dinner at the Alhambra Palace Hotel, adjacent to Granada's famous Alhambra.

I took with me 100 flyers advertising next year's IALLT conference at Tufts, 50 copies of the sheet about IALLT publications, and 50 regular IALLT brochures were distributed at EuroCALL table adjacent to the registration table. When I left, all of the conference flyers and most of the publications sheets and brochures had been taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Otto