

Guest Editorial: Technology in Language Education

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Technology has drastically changed our academic lives in the 21st century. The challenge as teachers and researchers in the field of language education is to prepare both teachers and students with new literacies and competencies. Terminology such as ‘digital literacy’, ‘ICT literacy’, ‘eliteracy’, ‘computer literacy’, ‘multiple literacies’, etc. are explained by researchers [1], and recommended by different reports [2-3] for the successful integration of technology in the process of effective language learning and teaching. Based on the literature, this integration has become a critical area for research line education and applied linguistics in the last decade. Since the first application of the term ‘Computer-Assisted Language Learning’ in the 1980s until adopting ‘Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)’, and emerging advanced and high-tech tools such as ‘Virtual Reality (VR)’ and ‘Robot-Assisted Language Learning (RALL)’ many scholars have emphasized the applications of technology in language education.

The literature also reveals that scholars have placed less emphasis on the issues of technology-mediated task-based language teaching, CALL teacher education, assessment in CALL, assistive technologies in CALL, virtual ethnography, and the role of metacognition in CALL. We believe that these topics are worth further investigation and analysis. Therefore, this special issue tries to present studies related to the above-mentioned research topics from different parts of the world. By the publication of the special issue, we aim to introduce less-addressed issues in the field and cultivate the understanding of new issues in CALL and TELL. We hope that this special issue will encourage more innovative research on the applications of technology in language learning and teaching.

Whitehead Martelle and her colleagues at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the USA in the first paper entitled “We learned together it was best experiences for me: Website creation in an ESL classroom”, examine the learning opportunities and learning strategies afforded by technology-mediated tasks. In this qualitative study, they address several types of language learning strategies consistently emerging through data analysis: arranging and planning, self-evaluating, and cooperating.

Next, Fatemeh Nami investigates CALL teacher education in the context of Iran. In her paper entitled “Experiencing collaborative professional development in a blended CALL teacher education course”, she focuses on the potentials of collaborative learning experiences in a blended teacher education course for developing English as a foreign language teachers’ pedagogical knowledge of CALL. This case study reveals that collaboration in blended contexts significantly contributed to the development of different aspects of teachers’ knowledge of CALL integration.

In the third paper entitled “Foreign languages and computer-assisted learning: New principles for language assessment in teletandem?”, Douglas Altamiro Consolo reviews the principles and practical aspects of language assessment in foreign language learning with a focus on CALL and other contexts in which computers are used as a means for distance learning and language assessment. He concludes with the need for further investigation and the establishment of principles for language assessment in electronic contexts.

Boukhechba Hicham and Bouhania Bachir from Algeria use writing assistive technology to improve EFL university students’ performance. In the fourth paper, the authors study the suitable ways to overcome the difficulties students of English face with writing especially in terms of vocabulary items and spelling mistakes by exploring the effects of adapting autocorrect and spell-checkers technologies on their writing skills. Their findings of this experimental study show that the use of assistive technology has perceptible effects regarding the quality of students’ production as these technologies displace the attention from worrying about spelling mistakes to other aspects of writing.

Next, Vera Lúcia Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva and Ronaldo Correa Gomes Junior in the paper entitled “Digital tools for the development of oral skills in English”, reveal the results of a virtual ethnographic study developed in an online classroom in a public university in Brazil. After assessing digital tools for oral communication, the authors verified that digital tools had a positive impact on language learning, and increased learners’ opportunities for language practice. Moreover, they emphasize that the tools not only

contributed to the development of the students' oral skills but also decreased their anxiety when speaking English.

Last but not least, the fifth paper entitled "Weaving reflexivity and revealing of the self in online foreign language practice" by Josephine Remon, the author looks at how metacognition and revealing of the self combine when the full potential of the digital tools are put to use. Throughout this qualitative study, various appropriation regimes are discussed.

In our language education contexts, many technology-based tools affect the process of language teaching and learning in several ways. Undoubtedly, we are at the beginning of the integration of technologies in language education. Thus, we will encounter much more research from low-tech to high-tech tools in the near future which inspire the applications of technology in our language classrooms. However, we believe the mere integration of technology in our classroom for furnishing the environment with new technologies would not lead us to the better results in education, but the appropriate and smart integration of technology would be the vital key. Thus, language teachers and students should upskill themselves with new required skills in the 21st century to benefit from such an integration.

References

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