

Editorial

Teaching and Teacher Development in Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

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Technology has penetrated almost every dimension of our lives, including the field of language learning and teaching. Previous literature has highlighted the various affordances and constraints of using different technological tools from the learners' perspectives. Yet, it is equally important to understand the benefits and obstacles from the perspectives of language educators too. This especially can better inform teacher educators to provide in-time support in pre-service and in-service teacher training. Against this backdrop, this special issue of the *International Journal of TESOL Studies* aims to further our current understanding of how language educators perceive and implement technology in organizing technology-enhanced language learning: how they deal with the challenges they encounter; and more importantly, how teachers can be supported to effectively organize learning activities in different technological environments.

The pedagogical challenges educators have faced in the past few years have been unexpected and unprecedented. In our latest edited book *Language learning with technology: Perspectives from Asia* (Miller & Wu, 2021), most, if not all, of the chapter authors reported on case studies from the traditional physical classrooms. Yet, in this special edition, a salient contrast can be observed: regardless of age, teaching experience or technological savviness, educators have had to cope from teaching face-to-face to teaching online and this has resulted in challenges that were probably unimaginable a few years ago. The lessons we have learned from talking with each other, and reflecting on these abrupt pedagogical changes, researching and publishing our findings, have heightened our awareness of the possible future demands all educators must now engage with (see Miller & Wu, 2022). Dissipating our experiences and knowledge about how we made use of technology to enhance our teaching during COVID-19, is also of importance, and the articles in this special edition exemplify such endeavors.

As an illustration of the journal title, the articles in this special edition are truly international. We have contributions from Japan, Germany, USA, UK, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Australia, in addition to the editors from Mainland China and Hong Kong.

In the first article, Thomas N. Robb: Kyoto Sangyo University, Japan, makes reference to Paul Nation's four strand model for vocabulary learning: meaning focused input, meaning focused output, fluency practice and language focused learning. Robb highlights that even if teachers attempted to make use of Nation's model, there was usually not enough class time to allow for meaningful practice of the four skills. He therefore suggests that teachers ask students to make use of their mobile devices to examine the four strands in greater detail. In order to do this, the author presents a range of useful websites and activities which students can complete, and teachers can monitor.

Jennifer Schluer: Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany, is the second contributor to this

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special edition. In this paper Schluer writes about how to provide pre-service English language teachers with digital feedback while they studied on a Master's programme. Such students had never received any type of digital feedback before and so it was a novel experience for them. The purpose of the study was not only to use digital feedback as an efficient and effective means of providing students with feedback, but to get them to consider making use of such a method to give feedback when they became teachers. The paper draws on data pre-COVID-19, and then during COVID-19 from a course for pre-service teachers. This unique situation allowed the author to compare and contrast the students' perceptions, attitudes and skill development when given such feedback. After receiving feedback via an asynchronous audiovisual feedback method, students were then asked to comment on this method. The data shows a shift in perceptions by the student teachers from a wariness of using digital feedback methods, to a more positive acceptance of this method as a valuable alternative that is relevant in this era of digital education.

Educators from Vietnam and Singapore are the authors of the third paper in this special edition. Stewart Utley: British University Vietnam, Hanoi, and Jasper Roe: James Cook University, Singapore, present us with a paper on "The Effects of Online Teaching on Educator Identity in Vietnam During COVID-19". In this paper, the authors consider the effects of teacher identity with the change from traditional classroom based face-to-face lessons to online learning from the perspective of English language lecturers at a university in Vietnam. Until the advent of COVID-19 online delivery of course in Vietnamese higher education was a novelty. Therefore, most lecturers and their students had little or no experience of online teaching/learning. Utley and Roe were interested in investigating whether the sudden change to online teaching would affect issues related to teacher identity and specifically what "congruences" and "incongruences" teachers identified with while delivering their courses online. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews the researchers discovered that at the beginning of their online teaching experiences many lecturers commented on their professional identity being compromised and sites of incongruences were common, however, after a short period of time the teacher's identities were restored and their professional identity remained stable and unchanged. In fact, many of those interviewed commented that after becoming used to online teaching, they felt that they were able to explore more areas to their teaching. Although online teaching changed the ways in which teachers delivered their course material, it did not change their core beliefs and values as teachers.

Paper four in this special issue comes from Japan. Neil Cowie: Okayama University, and Mehrasa Alizadeh: International Professional University of Technology, Osaka, write about the affordances and challenges of virtual reality (VR) for teaching/learning. Virtual reality is an emerging technology that has yet to be integrated into classroom practice. As such, there is little research done into the benefits this type of technology might have for students' learning (Wu et al., 2021). In this small-scale study with five students, over one academic year, the researchers investigate three uses of VR: firstly, the students were asked to review VR apps connected to their studies and the results were mostly positive, apart from the issue of cybersickness. Secondly, each student was asked to create their own VR room to teach others something about their academic areas. Finally, students created their own 360-degree virtual tour using "ThingLink". The researchers, by collaborating with the five students, discovered the limits and challenges that VR lessons might have. These include, training in the use of VR technologies, expanding the teacher's technical knowledge, and issues related to ethics and health when using VR for teaching purposes. Although VR technology as a teaching tool is still in its infancy, the researchers urge teachers not to be too anxious about the challenges and be open to the affordances VR has to offer in terms of student learning.

Turning to the USA, paper five by Taylor Davis: Department of Learning Technologies, University of North Texas, and Geneva Tesh: Department of Learning Technologies, University of North Texas, report on the use of an online learning management system (LMS) with English language students. This paper discusses issues related to the challenges of moving from face-to-face teaching to making use of an LMS for lessons, assessments and communication among eight English Language Learners

in a high school context in Dallas, Texas. The small-scale study invited the students to participate in a focus group interview by using open-ended questions to investigate the students' perceptions about their online learning experiences during COVID-19. The themes that emerged from the interview were communication, organization, technical skills, distraction and motivation. Overall, the students had positive attitudes towards their online learning experiences. They thought the LMS allowed them to better organize their work, and gave them time to check things for themselves. Some of the students had concerns about their technical skills and abilities to stay focused during lessons.

Cynthia C. James: University of Cambridge, United Kingdom along with her colleagues Kean Wah Lee: University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus, Malaysia, and Abdul Aziz Arsyad: Institute of Teacher Education, Tawau Campus, Malaysia, present article six which deals with how when teachers' narratives are put onto community blogging sites the feedback and comments can enhance the professional development of ESL teachers. After posting the teachers' story online, other Malaysian teachers were invited to share their ideas and knowledge on a dedicated blog site about how to respond to the technology-enhanced language teaching initiatives outlined in the narratives. The overall response was positive from both the narrators and the blog responses and was presented, by the researchers, as another way to engage teachers with their self-directed professional development.

Article seven, comes from Japan. Eric Hagley: Hosei University, outlines an innovative use of virtual exchanges (VE) with Japanese language students as a way to enhance teacher training. Hagley made use of questionnaires, weekly journal writing, and website logs to analyse teachers' responses to participating in the International Virtual Exchange Project (IVEProject). The data shows that teachers were generally in support of using VE for classroom teaching, but for these teachers to use such innovative technology they had to gain confidence in their own skills before promoting the IVEProject to their students. The findings call for specific technical training on how to use VE in the classroom and at the end of this paper the researcher makes some specific suggestions on how institutions can move forward in promoting VE in education.

Article eight by Kevin Balchin: Canterbury Christ Church University, UK, discusses the use of instructional technologies to cater to individual learning differences. In this study, Balchin shows how the flexible use of technology in classroom teaching enables students to get the most out of their learning. Starting from the premise that teachers, learners and educational institutions nowadays expect technology to be part of the learning process in both content and language classes the researcher set out to discover the extent of the use of technology in language classes. Data was collected from an Algerian university where three teachers were interviewed and then three students completed weekly diaries and were interviewed to investigate their responses and feelings on the use of technology classes. The responses show that teachers need to become more aware of the individual needs and wants of their students and that making use of interactive tools and digital resources may allow for learners to become more engaged in their learning as these are already part of their everyday lived experiences. Customizing the technological tools students can access may allow for individual learner differences and potentially accommodate a range of learning styles. For this to happen, though, there is also a need for specific teacher training in how to make use of technology in language teaching.

Research article nine comes from Germany. Almut Ketzer-Nöltge and Mihaela Markovic: Leipzig University, examine critical digital literacy skills, from the perspective of foreign language students at two universities: one in Germany and the other in the USA. By having students work collaboratively across the two institutions in Virtual Exchange mode, and as part of two different online courses, the students were able to appreciate the value of the multiple online resources they had to use in order to achieve the course objectives. Working in small international teams to compare and contrast their findings about credible and non-credible media coverage. As a result of the types of audio and video interactions, the researchers claim that their students' critical digital literacy skills developed throughout the project as a result of the cross-national, communicative asynchronous exchanges in their small groups.

We return to Japan for the tenth article in this special edition. Naomi Fujishima and Susan Meiki: Okayama University, present the case for preferring to offer courses online, rather than face-to-face. When courses are online, learners are challenged to take more control of their learning, while teachers explore ways to guide students through the processes of setting goals, selecting materials, planning learning activities, monitoring progress, and assessing outcomes. In this study, Fujishima and Meiki describe how they modified an existing course, which aimed to develop learner autonomy and moved it online. By way of a detailed narrative, the researchers explore the challenges and rewards of having students move away from classroom-based learning. The article is concluded with some useful pedagogical recommendations to help other educators when moving their courses online.

In the final two chapters of this special edition, we interview two specialists in the area of language teaching with technology. Lindsay interviewed Mimi Li from the Department of Literature and Languages at Texas A&M University-Commerce, and Gavin interviewed Mark Pegrum from the Graduate School of Education at The University of Western Australia in Perth. In each interview, we explore how the interviewees became interested in the use of technology in education and what some of their best practice advice is. Given that technology is here to stay, we also invited the interviewees to share some of their thoughts on the future.

We have enjoyed preparing this special edition of the *International Journal of TESOL Studies* and would like to thank all the international contributors who have worked with us to make this a really “special” issue. We would also like to thank the journal editor Xinghua Liu for inviting us to participate in this exciting project. We hope that all teachers and researchers working with implementing technology into their teaching, either in class or out of class, benefit from reading the articles presented here, and that as a result of this special edition we are all better prepared for the future.

Finally, the editors would like to take this opportunity to thank the international reviewers for their invaluable comments, advice, and counsel. Reviewer list in alphabetical order:

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