

RESEÑAS

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Multiculturalism and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

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The book is a well-chosen selection of studies related to the field of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) centered around the notion of multiculturalism. It is intended to provide a rich source of the most recent studies in this area from various countries. Living in the rapidly advancing era of digital communication, there is a growing concern for adopting more modern strategies and materials of education. Thus, the book can be considered as a reliable source, which meets the needs of the majority of the readers interested in the subjects such as education, TELL, foreign language learning, sociocultural theory, etc.

The first chapter of the book introduces the action research, which investigates the use of social media tools such as Edmodo and Glogster for the purpose of encouraging communication and co-construction of knowledge by English language learners. It argues that the online communities formed in this way can promote the opportunity to “share, collaborate and reflect” (p. 2). The participant of this research were three Australian teacher-researchers and thirty Japanese exchange students in Sidney, Australia. According to the findings of the research, integrating educational social media tools into foreign language teaching can encourage communication among the students. However, some measures need to be taken to make it even more efficient. First, providing easier access to the social media tools for the students in and out of classroom. Second, the students need to be informed about the objectives of different activities. Finally, showing more flexibility in terms of time and location of using these tools can be beneficial. As Japanese speakers are predominantly reticent students (Jones, 1999), the findings of this research can be valuable for the EFL teachers who are eager to promote communication through the application of “community-oriented tools”.

The second chapter examines the influence of Learning Management System Moodle on the Taiwanese EFL learners’ self-efficacy and writing performance. It is mentioned that improved self-efficacy plays a great role in achieving academic goals. Accordingly, self-efficacy can be enhanced by emphasizing a “process-oriented” form of learning rather than “product-oriented” learning. The findings of the research also confirm the fact that the learners’ writing performance and confidence are significantly improved through Moodle E-journal writing activities.

The third chapter by Gupta investigates the impact of the use of technology on engineering students’ writing skills. 80 engineering college students from Punjab, India, participated in this study. The underlying theoretical framework of the research is constructivism, which is closely related to web-based teaching methods. The results

of the statistical analyses as well as the questionnaires support the effectiveness of the integration of technology into foreign language learning classes. It is concluded that the writing skills of the students are significantly developed through the implementation of Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) activities.

Chapter four of the book presents a study, which explores the use of iPad for improving second language learning in secondary education in Spain. In this context, they are given the chance to establish a “complex communicative process” based on their “free narrative texts”. It is discussed that the students’ multimodal productions are enhanced through employing iPad tablets in cooperative learning teams as they can produce, edit and narrate their own short stories. This provides them with the opportunity to practice and internalize “complex multimodal literacy strategies”.

The fifth chapter is about a study conducted by Sadeghi and Ghorbani in Semnan, Iran. They have examined the impact of the integration of TED-vodcast into EFL pedagogy on 34 female Iranian learners’ oral proficiency level through interviews. According to the statistical findings of their research, employing this online source of conference presentations has a significant influence on the learners’ oral accuracy and proficiency in contrast to the traditional forms of classroom discussions.

The next chapter by Gabaudan describes a French language learning project which aims to develop students’ use of colloquialisms through collaboration for producing digital audio-visual clips together with their classmates and visiting native Erasmus students. It provides them the opportunity to produce individualized learning resources of their own. Additionally, the project is meant to improve the students’ “intercultural awareness”. This foreign language learning project is based on the theoretical basis of constructivism, which emphasizes the implementation of authentic learning contexts as well as autonomy promoting activities in a collaborative environment. It is concluded that the project has been successful in establishing a collaborative environment for the students to create audio-visual clips with the help of their native peers, which has given them the chance to experience authentic cross-cultural communication. This experience not only enables the students to develop their “digital literacy”, but also helps to broaden their view and understanding of the foreign culture.

The seventh chapter by Yeromin and Charskykh touches upon the necessity of “sub-lingual communication” between professors and the students in the context of higher education, more specifically, in language learning classes. It emphasizes a need for “self-education” of the educators to keep pace with the fast-changing world of “new media” in which social media plays a great role in connecting different people and cultures. Thus, modern technology widely used by the new generation of learners should be considered as a constructive means available for facilitating communication as well as education.

Chapter 8 by Sahragard and Meihami is centered on a sociocultural model of education for promoting students’ “intercultural competence” through Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). It is widely acknowledged that intercultural competence is a fundamental requirement of English language learning (Canagarajah, 2007). Sahragard and Meihami draw on the theoretical framework proposed by Bennett (1993) known as the “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)”

which introduces six stages of developing intercultural competence, namely Denial, Defense/Polarization, Mineralization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. As for the relationship between technology and pedagogy, indeed, the centrality of culture and intercultural activities in CALL stems from sociocultural theory. Additionally, various tools and materials available in CALL promote authentic intercultural interactions.

In Chapter 9, the valuable issue of developing the students' collocational competence through web-based concordancing is presented. It is a quasi-experimental study, which compares the web-based method of collocation instruction with the traditional paper-based method. Kızıl and Kilimci found that online concordancing helps students understand and remember collocations more efficiently. In addition, it creates a more engaging autonomous context for discovering the grammatical patterns.

Chapter 10 presents an extensive overview of literature for various concepts linked to the digital pedagogy such as CALL, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as well as the relationship between Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and language learning. The application of these recent digital tools into the language learning environment can be enlightening for language practitioners to achieve the objectives of their lessons more effectively.

Chapter 11 introduces an innovative implementation of 3D virtual worlds, known as Second Life, in a Turkish university. The study includes the analyses of English language classroom discourse to determine different forms of "social presence" in the virtual classroom. The study draws on the concept of social presence proposed by Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2000). According to them, social presence is "the ability of learners to project themselves socially and emotionally as 'real' people into a community of learners" (p. 94). The findings of the research on 54 freshman students reveal that the most prevalent forms of social presence functions were "expression of emotions", "vocatives" and "asking questions". On the contrary, "phatics" and "salutations", "referring explicitly to the others' messages" and "quoting from others' messages" were rarely present in the data. Accordingly, it is argued that the use of social presence functions can be an indicator of effective "critical thinking processes" and "group interactions" in the course of classroom discourse.

The research presented in chapter 12 is primarily about a comparative study between two models of technology-enhanced vocabulary learning, namely "semantic network" and "syntactic structure" development model. As to the findings of the study, the application of these two models is significantly beneficial for improving students' knowledge of vocabulary. That is to say, the students instructed using technology devices through these two models outperformed the control group, who were instructed traditionally, in terms of vocabulary learning.

An additional study related to CALL is presented in chapter 13. It measures the attitudes of adult EFL learners towards a computer-based program at a state university in Turkey through questionnaires and interviews. According to the results of the study on the learners aged between their late 20s to early 30s, the lower-level learners view CALL much more positively than the higher-level learners. They find it more

enjoyable, comfortable, and flexible. However, many students prefer the traditional form of the classroom as it is more social and interactive. Additionally, there is no meaningful difference in the views of the participants in terms of their gender, age, educational level, or status of employment.

Chapter 14 presents a study conducted in Iran focused on the notion of Dynamic Assessment (DA) based on the Vygotskian concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Azad argues that teaching and assessment must be considered as inseparable complementary concepts. Thus, it can facilitate pedagogy by identifying each learner's capability and providing adequate support when needed. She emphasizes the role that multi-media can play in the dynamic assessment and therefore improving language learning. It is discussed that multi-media-based mediation can be integrated with the key concepts of sociocultural theory to provide more constructive strategies to enhance language learning.

Chapter 15 by Cimermanova from Slovakia, provides an overview of CALL in her own country. Based on her extensive survey of recent studies and her personal experience, she states that some measures need to be taken to make TELL even more effective in Slovakia.

The last chapter of the book is centered around different issues regarding E-learning in Africa and worldwide. The researcher provides extensive literature on E-learning and explores various concepts related to E-learning such as the definition of E-learning, perceptions of E-learning, the feasibility of E-learning for language modules, effective assessment in E-learning, technical problems in E-learning, culture in E-learning, and challenges facing it.

Overall, the book successfully considers the practical notion of technology-enhanced learning from various angles. However, the reader might not be able to relate some chapters of the book, for instance, chapter 9, to the concept of "multiculturalism" as the title of the book suggests. For this reason, I believe the inclusion of a concluding chapter could help the reader to come up with a comprehensive image of all the notions discussed, which were relevant to the main theme of the book.

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