

Full Length Research Paper

Technologies and Second Language Learners

Amin Davoodi, Rafael Lara-Alecio, Beverly J. Irby, Fuhui Tong, Nahed Abdelrahman, Roya Pashmforoosh, & Matthew J. Etchells

To cite this article: Amin Davoodi, Rafael Lara-Alecio, Beverly J. Irby, Fuhui Tong, Nahed Abdelrahman, Roya Pashmforoosh, & Matthew J. Etchells (Eds.). (2021). Technologies and second language learners, Dual Language Research and Practice, 1, pp-1-3.

For more than three decades, scholars, teachers, practitioners and researchers have utilized various technologies to improve second language learning classes. From early computers to mobile devices (Lin, 2019) and educational robots (Davoodi, 2020), many scholars have studied the advantages and the disadvantages of integrating technologies into language classes. However, few studies have included the challenges of using technologies while providing practical guidelines on transforming such challenges into opportunities. Therefore, the main goal of this special issue, *Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities*, is to provide practical guidelines on transforming the challenges of technology enhanced language learning into teaching and learning opportunities.

The first paper in this special issue provided a detailed overview of technology-enhanced language education. Khoshnevisan critically reviewed contradictory opinions by scholars from different parts of the world on the use of technologies for language learning purposes. He, then, focused on how certain technologies can be used to improve second language motivation which is a key factor in successful language learning experiences. He finally discussed the challenges of using technologies in EFL/ESL classrooms and argued how teachers and learners can overcome such challenges.

In this issue, you will find an article by Elsa Richter on the issue of social presence in online classes. Collaboration and communication are the main features of second language classrooms; however, students in online classes usually feel isolated and do not have enough opportunities for collaborations. This may result in lack of social presence in virtual classes. Richter focused on investigating indicators of social presence in a synchronous English for Academic Purposes class for Chinese high school students. This paper provided a clear picture of the issue of social presence in virtual classes and how teachers can solve it.

The third article in this issue addressed how “virtual exchanges” in schools can improve intercultural communication among students with the goal of empowering their skills and knowledge as citizens of a globalized world. Lin focused on a virtual fieldwork project using a platform which enabled ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers to virtually connect their classes to different classes all around the world. Lin discussed how ESOL teachers can benefit from integrating virtual exchanges into their teaching and argued the benefits of such intercultural communications for students. Finally, the author investigated the challenges and

barriers of using virtual exchanges in schools and introduced some strategies to address these challenges.

The last article in this special issue dealt with the issue of engagement in online classes. Although various studies have been done on engagement in virtual classes (Kahu, 2011; Ross, 2010; Shu, Zhao, & Wan, 2012), few have focused on the perceptions of pre-service teachers on engagement in language classes. Building upon the concepts of social presence, cognitive presence & teaching presence, Rashtchi and Khoshnevisan investigated pre-service teacher's perceptions of engagement in online classes during the pandemic. They specifically studied how discussion boards in asynchronous classes affect the perception of ESOL teachers regarding engagement in online classes. They also discussed practical strategies for using discussion boards more effectively in virtual classes.

COVID19 did not exist when I submitted a proposal to DLRPJ for a special issue on *Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities*. However, as a proponent of educational technologies and distance education, I felt the need for a special issue to identify some of the challenges of integrating technologies into EFL/ESL classrooms and to introduce some practical guidelines on how such challenges can be transformed into learning opportunities. Although COVID19 highlighted the importance of distance education and educational technologies, it worked against this special issue as some researchers, whose proposals were accepted for this special issue, had to withdraw their papers due to various COVID-19 related issues. Therefore, I am grateful that we have managed to complete this special issue regardless of the unprecedented challenges that all of us have faced since the beginning of the pandemic. I would like to thank the Editors of DLRPJ for giving me the opportunity of serving as the guest editor for this special issue. Also, I should thank the reviewers who graciously spent a lot of time on reviewing the papers and providing fruitful comments to the contributors of this special issue.

References

- Davoodi, A. (2020) The Effect of Robot Assisted Language Learning on Second Language Learners' Motivations and Engagements: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Southwest Educational Research Association*, Arlington, Texas. Retrieved from <http://sera-edresearch.org/2020Program.pdf>
- Kahu, E. R. (2011). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), 758–773. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2011.598505
- Lin, J. J., & Lin, H. (2019). Mobile-assisted ESL/EFL vocabulary learning: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 32(8), 878-919.
- Ross, C. (2010). Engaging distance students in learning: What matters to students, what motivates them and how can engagement in learning be fostered? Lower Hutt, New Zealand: Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://repository.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/handle/11072/1319>
- Shu, F., Zhao, C., & Wan, L. (2012). Enhancing online class student engagement through discussion. In E. Popescu, Q. Li, R. Klamma, H. Leung, & M. Specht (Eds.), *Advances in web-based learning—ICWL 2012* (pp. 349–354). Berlin Heidelberg: Springer.

Editors:

Amin Davoodi

Texas A&M University

amindavoodi1988@tamu.edu

Rafael Lara-Alecio

Texas A&M University

a-lara@tamu.edu

Beverly J. Irby

Texas A&M University

irbyb@tamu.edu

Fuhui Tong

Texas A&M University

fuhuitong@tamu.edu

Nahed Abdelrahman

Texas A&M University

nrahman@tamu.edu

Roya Pashmforoosh

Texas A&M University

roya2016@tamu.edu

Matthew Etchells

Texas A&M University

matthewetchells79@tamu.edu