

## Book Review

# A Review of the Volume in the Advances in Educational Technologies and Instructional Design (AETID)

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### ABSTRACT

Congcong Wang and Lisa Winstead are editors of this 386-pages volume, which contains five sections and 17 chapters, the first of which is a 46-page long introduction followed by 16 original research papers, all of which offer valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of a current problem of foreign language education in the digital age. The first section of the volume is entitled “Commentary,” the second section is entitled “Technologies Across Continents,” the third section of the volume is entitled “Web Collaboration Across Languages,” the fourth section is entitled “Less Commonly Taught Languages,” and finally, the fifth section focuses on “Teacher Education and Learning Strategies.”

### KEYWORDS

Digital Age, Foreign Language Learning, Foreign Language Teachers’ Attitudes, Less-Commonly Taught Languages, Translanguaging

### BOOK REVIEW

A review of the volume in the Advances in Educational Technologies and Instructional Design (AETID) Book Series edited by Congcong Wang and Lisa Winstead: *Handbook of Research on Foreign Language Education in the Digital Age* (2016, Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global)

Congcong Wang and Lisa Winstead are editors of this 386-pages volume, which contains five sections and 17 chapters, the first of which is a 46-pages long introduction followed by 16 original research papers, all of which offer valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of a current problem of foreign language education in the digital age. The first section of the volume is entitled Commentary, the second section is entitled Technologies across Continents, the third section of the volume is entitled Web Collaboration across Languages, the fourth section is entitled Less Commonly Taught Languages, and finally, the fifth section focuses on Teacher Education and Learning Strategies.

The volume is introduced by the editors whose initial 46 pages titled *Introduction: Foreign Language Education in the Digital Age* provide a valuable and thorough overview of how technology has evolved over time and in the last decades contributed to language communication alongside the tectonic political, economic, and social changes. The Introduction chapter is divided into six sections that deal with important issues of language teaching in the digital age. The first section's title is: *Understanding language communication and technological influences* focuses on two major points of interest: language and language as a complex term. The first issue deals with the problem of how the language was understood and developed in the previous ages and tracks the beginnings of printing techniques in China, Korea, Japan, as well as in Europe. It highlights the problem of filters, an issue that instant and direct communication via different social media platforms seems to have decreased in the recent time. For instance, the authors claim that "immediate access to the internet provides us with opportunities to instantly access information and make connections with others and outside resources" (p. xxvii). The second issue deals with the topic of language comparability claiming language being a "complex term stemming from the different ways it is researched, learned, utilized in the digital age." (ibid.) They further claim that "language reflects thought and can include any form of synchronous or asynchronous communication that leads to negotiation of meaning which may include not the only the words we speak, write or listen to but also language gestures, signs, and symbols in off-line or online communication in the digital age." (ibid.). It also focuses on language learning, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between "first language (FL), second language (SL), heritage language (HL), as well as dual immersion (DI) and bilingual programs" (p. xxix) and in which way they contribute to language learning. In order to better understand the diverse language learners' contexts the authors suggest teachers and other educators to become more informed to apply appropriate and differentiated pedagogical approaches and methods to cater for learners' plurilingual experiences and capabilities.

The second major section of the Introduction focuses on technology-assisted foreign language learning in the digital age. Since this section is crucial for the understanding of technology-assisted language teaching and learning, we are going to look into it with more detailed overview. Pivotal to the technology-assisted language teaching and learning is what Wang and Winstead's claim that "free access to portable, global, cross-cultural, individualized and multilingual modes of chat, audio, and visual language interaction exist in most of the world" (p. xxxi). The authors discuss new patterns of learning that should be employed in order to move learning away from rigid boxes and enclosed spaces. They also claim, "digital language learners (DLL) should have opportunities to move beyond traditional and rigid barriers of traditional language teaching and learning." (ibid.). Language learners should instead "mirror their informal learning modes as experienced via internet technology, computer games, social media, and mobile devices." (ibid.). Further, Wang and Windstead also claim that the focal point of a successful language learning in a technology-enhanced learning environment is having "institutional support with appropriate technology to meet learner's needs in the language learning environment," (p. xxxi) such as software and hardware requirements, high speed internet, which has proven to be of vital importance during the school-closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic across the globe. The authors also point to how the development of technology has changed the ways language is taught and learnt as well as how our perceptions evolved and conceptual understanding changed. They highlight the importance of the so-called digital revolution that took place in the era between the 1980s with the first television platforms to the relentless development of mobile phone usage in the 2000s. A new term has been coined to better describe the educational novelty of the 1990s and 2000s, namely Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which was deemed an appropriate term in the field of computer-mediated language study, although it is supposed not inclusive enough. Hence, Wand and Windstead and other experts in the field have suggested a more broad term, Technology-Assisted Language Learning (TALL) (2019, p. xxxii). This is further differentiated into "Technology-Assisted Foreign Language Learning (TAFLL), Technology-Assisted Second Language Learning (TASLL), Technology-Assisted Dual Language Learning (TADLL), Technology-Assisted

Heritage Language Learning (TAHLL) and Technology-Assisted Heritage Language Maintenance (TAHLM)” (ibid.).

The following three subchapters deal with traditional face-to-face classroom evolution with digital support, online/distance learning, hybrid/blended/flipped learning, and home-school- and informal learning, all of which was heavily used in the period of 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures. Wang and Windstaed (2019) claim that as far as face-to-face classroom in-presence learning the interaction depends more or less on the “instructor’s educational philosophical stance. Thus, should the instructor have a more progressivist (learner-centered) philosophy, the course will include some lecture but also social language interaction for language development.” (p. xxxiii). On the other hand, an instructor essentialist might focus on more teacher –centred approaches and methods, and consequently engage less in the classroom interaction with students, thus allowing for less social interaction opportunities. However, advances in technology during the 1990s allowed for computer supported instruction, learning and as well as games which could be accessed via CDs and discs (the so-called floppy discs). Nevertheless, widespread access to educational sources and greater ability to communicate online became more available to the public in the mid-1990s (Zarotsky & Jaresko, 2000, as cited in Wang and Windstead, 2016). This coincided with increased mobile or cell phone usage in the 2000s and greater smart phone usage in the late 2000s. Similarly, changes in learning have occurred such as a move away from the overhead projector to multimedia presentation (with the introduction of smartboards in the late 2000s). The introduction of computer-assisted learning and teaching as well as the increased abilities to go online has changed the face-to-face classroom practice significantly. Further, innovative digital devices and platforms are enhancing foreign language teaching and learning in classrooms as well as creating new spaces inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., hybrid, flipped, online, home-schooling). We should also not forget the onset of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus+), blogs, video-sharing websites (e.g., Vimeo, YouTube) and website builders who enable students to absorb vast audio-visual information as well as display and share their creative work with their teachers and peers alike. Wang and Windstaed (2016) continue with a thorough overview of online/distance learning (p. xxxv), hybrid/blended/flipped learning (ibid.), and homeschool and informal learning (p. xxxvi).

As far as hybrid/blended/flipped learning are concerned, they “provide flexibility for educators and their students. Hybrid or blended courses are delivered partially in classroom and partially online.” (p. xxxv). The scope of blended learning is generally intended to reduce the educator’s workload in face-to-face time (Caulfield, 2011). Vital part of blended learning are videotaped lectures, online resources, podcasts developed for outside-class learning, which are accessible online for student to preview or review (Educause Learning Initiative, 2012). Thus, the educator can use the class time for differentiating instruction and engaging students in meaningful collaboration on group projects instead of investing precious time in introducing new content.

As far as the flipped classroom is concerned greater emphasis is placed on learners’ ability to self-regulate their learning as well as to collaborate with other students either face-to-face or online in order to be ready to tackle problem solving and improvement before attending class (Educause Learning Initiative, 2012).

Point three of the Introduction section focuses on another important feature of language learning, namely the uneven development and transferability issues of TALL pedagogy around the world; secondly, the issues of the uneven language status and power that such a language exerts over other languages and its learners; thirdly, the inequitable access to technology and other digital devices; and lastly, how the latter should be amended.

Point four of the Introduction section deals with the rise of the digital culture and its transnational influences. The unprecedented speed of digital communication has given rise to language evolutions and cross-pollination. For instance, a new word is created (internet phenomena) and quickly applied in different languages spoken on the other hemisphere. Wang and Windstead (2016, p. xlvixlvii) claim, that “this neologism/newly-created word can skip several traditional steps (e.g., publication,

translation, journalism, television) and become a popular word in another country through social media.” Point four of the Introduction also deals with digital culture, with the language status and power, with creative and visionary power of the digital education, as well as with the onset of digital/virtual universal language, which is where we make a halt and explain in more details. Wang & Windstead (ibid, l.) explain how “the Digital/Virtual Universal Language or D-Language refers to a language that is effective for human interaction in the virtual world as well as a language that is easy, effective and efficient for human-robot and robot-robot communication, which includes but is not limited to current programming languages.” This kind of technology or D-Language enables communication between different human speakers as well as robots. D-Language also uses logographs and emoticons and thus further simplifies communication (we have all heard of “lol” – laughing out loud). Consequently, we can say that “images empower D-language by increasing the quantity and accuracy of information delivered in ways that traditional oral or written forms cannot” (ibid, p. li). What is also highly interesting is the issue of, as Wang & Windstead would put it (ibid, p. lii), technological universals that have emerged in the digital age and are supposed to represent similar forms of technology for learning language.

One of the side products of the digital age is the new digital culture. Wand & Windstead (ibid, p. liii) claim that “children who have broad accessibility to technology (e.g., Warcraft, Wii, Facebook, YouTube, Youku) may spend most time socializing online instead of in real life (Gee & Hayes, 2011 as cited in Wang & Windstead, 2016). The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed all the flaws of the digital socializing of the past decade, since teenagers and adults alike have enjoyed the safety of mobile devices which have allowed them digital intimacy near or far, but they could enjoy face-to-face communication as well and that was heavily hampered due to the restrictions caused by the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, there is a positive side to that, namely, the technology allowing shy learners or learners with various face-to-face communication difficulties to interact anonymously with humans and even robots in a virtual environment. That has come particularly handy during the school closures due to the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The all-present technology is in spite of all the positive it has done and is still doing for the humanity often seen as a human threat and not only merely as a benign facilitator. Currently, technologies are utilized as facilitators in various language learning and classroom contexts. But the questions that poses itself, whether the technologies would in the future replace the human instructor or not and there is fear of “digital colonization” (Wang & Windstead, 2019, p. lvi). The authors sustain that the next generation technology is being researched and has the potential to replace human educators; the technology has not yet entirely replaced the human in language education. Schools and universities provide benign opportunities for technological professional development so that teachers can convert their current in-presence courses into online formats a process that was heavily encouraged during the pandemic of Covid-19. The general public does not realize that developing an online language course (or lessons via virtual classrooms in Moodle, Google docs or similar) requires a lot of expertise and effort in not just language but also technological expertise. Once the course is out, it normally requires less human involvement unless it becomes outdated or there is a technical flaw.

The last point in the Introduction chapter of the volume deals with the issue of whether we as humans are losing something or gaining something in the digital age. The authors of the Introduction chapter sustain that the digital age does not necessarily mean that the traditional teaching approaches are to be scrapped or that they even are not beneficial. Instead, they suggest a peaceful co-existence of digital and traditional culture. Although the fruit of the decades of technological development is a positive feature and good news for the humanity, Wang and Windstead (2016) suggest a thorough rethinking of the role of technology in the human society and “leave breathing space for individuals and groups from all walks of life by setting up boundaries rather than pushing everyone to accept new technologies or digital demands.” (p. lix). Basically, the authors plead for the salvation of the traditional, original language teaching and learning approaches while at the same time not eschewing the gains of the digital era. It is true that technology “can have the potential to promote human gain”

(ibid, p. lx), yet their role should not be to completely replace human-to-human interaction, but facilitate it and help create scenarios that would benefit and support language learning practice, acquisition, and development.

The following part of the book review is focused on presentation of the remaining 16 chapters of the volume.

Chapter 1 (pages 18) is titled *Reflection: How Now Shapes the Future – Emerging Trends from the LCTL Trenches* by Jacques du Plessis and offers a thorough commentary on the state of foreign language education in the digital age. The author argues that the current position of LCTLs (Less Commonly Taught Languages) is serious compared to the steady enrolment numbers of Spanish or Chinese Mandarin and similar languages in the USA, but promises to exploit the issue and present its perspective side. Du Plessis takes the situation at the University of Michigan in focus and reports how the state funding for students' courses has dwindled from 80% in the 1960s to about 16% in 2014. Similar situation can be seen in other state universities around the USA, which has caused student loans skyrocket to more than 1.9 trillion US dollars in 2015 (2016, p. 2). Needless to say the amount of pressure on the students has more than tripled due to their debts on the one hand and their study obligations on the other.

The dwindling state funding has often forced the universities to increase their tuition fees, which is reflected in the university's choice of courses, naturally, they would opt for the more profitable ones as a result of the situation described above. Universities also opt for offering more skill-based courses, such as nursing, a legal degree or similar, and decrease the offer on humanities and LCTLs in due course. LCTLs seemed to have gotten less attention and due to shortages with staff, problems with timetable and enrolment, they were close to "extinction". Du Plessis argues that the trend could be reversed. He also pleads for greater interchangeability of courses of LCTLs and the possibility of issuing language certificates, be it minor or major, and he writes in favour of a better cooperation within the campuses of universities. His proposal of a new model of the potential development of LCTLs is as follows (du Plessis, 2016, p. 6): "Easy access to broad band internet is expected. An adequate level of computer literacy is needed. The student needs to be comfortable enough to learn and work in a paperless environment and have a familiarity with social media. Finally, it is very important for the student to be self-driven and a successful learner outside of a bricks and mortar classroom." The fact that in 2021 we still discuss the importance of broadband internet and adequate digital literacy is an issue that needs serious attention, because it is obvious, that substantial progress has not been achieved in these areas. Du Plessis also specifically mentions virtual high schools that were on the rise for example in the US state of Wisconsin and offer courses that usually would not be offered because the state-run schools would deem them unprofitable. Virtual schools have thus laid the path of new infrastructure and have thus transcended "the boundaries of traditional schooling and to avail themselves of new opportunities that are not available otherwise." (ibid., p. 7).

The second chapter (pages 1032) of the volume is authored by Carolin Fuchs and is titled *The structural and dialogic aspects of Language Massive Open Online Courses (LMOOLCs)*. Her case study contributes greatly to the ever-growing body of research on Language Massive Open Online Courses (LMOOCs) by examining their structural aspects (i.e., layout and format) and dialogic nature (i.e., interaction and negotiation) from the language learner's perspective. As a sample of this exploratory study, 15 student teachers of English as a Second/Foreign Language from a private graduate institution on the East Coast of the U.S. have been drawn up. The participants enrolled in a beginner-level LMOOC of their choice kept a log of their learning process/progress over a period of eight weeks. At the end of the course, they were invited to reflect on their overall experience by filling out a post-project questionnaire. The goal of the project was to educate student teachers on the pedagogical implications of LMOOCs while exposing them to online language learning. The study focused primarily on self-reported system interaction and profile data since the author of the chapter was not involved in the design of any of the LMOOCs. Data collection instruments included a needs analysis, weekly LMOOC logs, and a post-LMOOC questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire

results, student-teachers' motivation was "satisfactory," and only four out of 15 student teachers completed their LMOOCs. Results further showed that structural aspects (i.e., content, materials, and procedures) ranked higher than dialogic aspects (i.e., scaffolding and feedback). This questions the over-reliance on content transmission and instructivist (or teacher-instruction) approaches in LMOOCs, especially since MOOCs enrolment numbers rely heavily on learner's self-motivation to sign up and complete a course.

Chapter 3 (pages 3358) of the volume is authored by Geraldine Blattner, Amanda Dalola, and Lara Lomicka. The title of the chapter is *Mindy our hashtags: a sociopragmatic study of student Interpretations of French Native Speakers' Tweets*. This chapter explores how French language learners in three different second and third year French courses (intermediate and advanced levels) understand and interpret hashtags using the popular microblogging tool Twitter. Blattner, Dalola and Lomicka highlighted how Twitter may provide an authentic and dynamic platform that enhances the language learning experience, while at the same time developing students' multiliteracy skills in a second language (L2). 18 students from a large south eastern university provided for a sample and 579 tweets were examined, 171 of which contained hashtags. Blattner, Dalola and Lomicka's aim was to investigate the relationship between students' ability to access information in the hashtags and to understand the nature of the larger tweet in which it appears. The results suggested that language learners have a tendency to glance over the hashtags and make guesses based on the information contained therein. The incorporation of cultural and linguistic elements linked to microbloggers' social tagging is an interesting and important aspect to add in foreign language classes. Learning about and understanding hashtags can promote the development of noticing cultural references, a skill that the authors of the chapter deem indispensable for successful autonomous communication across national boundaries and for online communicative practices.

Chapter 4 (pages 5982) of the volume is authored by Eliane Thaines Bodah, Josh Meuth Alldredge, Alcindo Neckel, Emanuelle Goellner and Brian William Bodah. The title of the chapter is *Challenges and Perspectives of Language Education Technology in Brazil: From Confronting Native Language Loss to Implementing EFL Classes* and it deals with the challenges, advances, and perspectives of language-education technology in Brazil. Language-education is an extremely important topic for Brazil because many indigenous languages are close to being extinct as a legacy of colonization and the fact that Portuguese, the national language of Brazil, is the only official language and thus monopolizes the entire communication. The issue is further complicated by Brazil's increasingly globalized economy that demands the acquisition of a foreign language in order to be competitive. English has been introduced into the curriculum of the vast majority of Brazilian public schools over the course of the past few decades. In addition to that, several privately owned profit-oriented English learning enterprises are offering widespread services throughout the country. Nevertheless, English (and even Portuguese) fluency remains to be a problem, which raises a number of critical questions that were discussed in this chapter, such as why is learning a new language such a challenge, which methodologies can be utilized to increase language acquisition and boost fluency, what are the new technologies that are used in teaching a second language in Brazilian schools, and how is their impact being measured? Further, the authors also focused on the question whether Brazilian teachers were prepared to integrate new technologies and innovative methods of teaching and learning. The results of the study have shown that several technologies are being implemented in Brazil, and that as a theoretical framework, educational communication has been recognized as a powerful tool to incorporate such technologies in language education. The study has also proven that the use of learning technologies is a common and growing feature among students, while it is increasing at slower pace among teachers.

Chapter five (pages 83103) of the volume is authored by Clara Burgo is titled *Teaching Spanish in the Digital Age: A Flipped Classroom or Just Hybrid?* and deals with the issue of flipped classroom in the field of Spanish teaching. The flipped classroom has become very popular recently as a result of a hybrid model of instruction (a combination of classroom instruction and an online platform). In

chapter five, the author aimed to respond to the following questions: What is a more recommended model for teaching Spanish in the digital age? What kind of activities should we focus on, as instructors, in the classroom? What works best for students to study and practice outside of the classroom? Both models were described with their advantages and disadvantages so that instructors could choose the one that better fitted their courses.

Recent research has shown the benefits of using this hybrid model compared to the traditional model of all face-to-face classroom instruction (Caulfield, 2011; Koller, 2011; Ng, 2009; Rubio & Thoms, 2012). According to the research cited above, instructors spend less time lecturing as students spend more time engaged in task-oriented activities in a hybrid course. According to Burgo (2016, p. 84) “the flipped classroom is a form of hybrid learning in which students learn new content online by watching video lectures before class. In this model, the activities that used to be homework are now done in class with teachers offering more personalized guidance and interaction with students, instead of providing them with lectures of the material.” The role of the educator also changed from that of a lecturer to a facilitator (Stutzmann, Colebech, Khalid, Chin, & Sweigart, 2013); the student changes from a passive to an active learner.

Chapter six (pages 104142) of the volume is authored by Bailu Li, Sijia Yao, and Wei Hong and is titled *Beginning Chinese as a Foreign Language Online Course Design: Utilizing Multiple Digital Modes and Assessments*. Li, Yao, and Hong (2016, p. 104) claim that “students may potentially benefit from more efficient uses of multimedia resources with increased critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills (Tricker et al., 2001; Felix, 2002; Spangle, Hodne & Schierling, 2002; Levy & Stockwell, 2006).” The authors also point out to the critics, who on the other hand highlight the potential drawbacks for distance learning students, including isolation from peers, lack of engagement, and insufficient technical support (Shield 2000; Muilenburg and Berge, 2005; Simonson et al., 2009; Berge 1999; Hara and Kling 2000; Bower, 2001; Wang & Chen 2013). Chapter six concerns the ways in which distance online learning content can be designed and developed through the utilization of multimedia and cultural-enriched materials for first-year-level College Chinese Foreign Language (CFL) courses. Li, Yao, and Hong discuss about employing virtual interaction, including student-content, student-instructor, and student-student interaction in course design and course design development. The chapter ends with discussions of the current challenges and new directions for a better practice of teaching and learning of Chinese language courses at a distance.

Chapter seven (pages 144169) of the volume is authored by Tasha N. Lewis and is titled *Creating a Micro-Immersion Environment Through Telecollaboration*. In this chapter, the author aims at offering an innovative approach for implementing telecollaborative activities with the purpose of enabling students to connect with peers in real-time, with the goal of creating a micro-immersion experience called a “Virtual Language Exchange”. This chapter further describes and compares two intermediate Spanish classes participating in Virtual Language Exchanges via Skype: one paired with peers from the target language and culture, and one paired with peers from within the class itself. Students from both groups participate in meaningful interactions in the target language in order to complete the assigned task-based activities. Lewis argues that “finding new ways to bring the target language to life by using technology, like the Virtual Language Exchange experience described here, can benefit students’ foreign language development in multiple ways.” (2016, p. 144).

Chapter eight (pages 170187) of the volume is authored by Margarita Vinagre and is titled *Developing Key Competences for Life-Long Learning through Virtual Collaboration: Teaching ICT in English as a Medium of Instruction*. In this chapter Vinagre presents the findings from a group of forty-nine fourth year undergraduate students who were trained in a blended learning environment over two months with the purpose of acquiring base knowledge and hands-on experience about information and communication technologies (ICT) and their possible applications to the EFL classroom. The course was taught in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) while the participants worked in a wiki designed specially to facilitate discussion and collaboration in the foreign language. The findings in this study indicate that virtual collaboration, when integrated in a classroom where

content is taught through EMI, has the potential to foster the acquisition not only of base knowledge of the subject, but also of a variety of key competences for life-long learning. These included mostly social and digital competences, entrepreneurial and learning to learn skills. Further, the participants of the study also mentioned that they had developed linguistic skills in the foreign language, although this was a non-language subject. Vinagre claims (2016, p. 181) that “these findings seem to support current research in EMI and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) which suggests that implementing these approaches into the classroom can offer significant gains in the foreign language (Admiraal, Westhoff & de Boot, 2006).” She suggests that in future, it would be worth exploring the impact that engaging students in virtual collaboration in either of these two environments has for foreign language development.

Chapter nine (pages 188207) of the volume is authored by Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer and is titled *Translanguaging in Multilingual Chat Interaction: Opportunities or Intercomprehension between Romance Languages*. In this chapter, Melo-Pfeifer analyses the intercomprehension between Romance Languages (RL) as a particular setting of multilingual interaction in the globalized and the digital world. According to Melo-Pfeifer, “intercomprehension is a multilingual practice where interlocutors collaboratively achieve meaning through the use of typologically related languages and other semiotic resources, exploiting the similarities existing across languages and the opportunities of transfer they offer.” (2016, p.188). She claimed that the communicative contract underlying this particular typology of multilingual interaction stresses that each interlocutor should master at least one RL and use it productively while at the same time trying to understand the RL of the other speakers. She draws her analyses of multilingual exchanges in chat rooms from the platform Galanet. She analysed critically three behaviours related to the breakdown of the communicative contract – and respective consequences – by using a taboo language (English), the use of other linguistic resources not included in the contract and the production of utterances in target languages. These communicative behaviours justified the need to enrich the understanding of intercomprehension by adopting a translingual lens and in due course abandoned the still prevalent monoglossic orientation in research in order to successfully deal with this multilingual communicative context.

Chapter ten (pages 208234) of the volume is authored by Ya Rao, Congcong Wang, and Jacob Bender and titles *French-Chinese Dialogical Interaction via Web Collaborative Blog-Writing: Code-Switching to Extend Online Tandem Language Learning*. In their study, Rao, Wang and Bender explore how a French-Chinese web collaborative blog-writing project provides a space for understanding the various metalinguistic approaches that foreign language learners’ use to facilitate foreign language learning and intercultural communication. The study adopted a multilingual-plurilingual approach, an interlingual approach and a web collaboration approach as a framework. The findings revealed the increased development of FFL (French foreign language) and CFL (Chinese foreign language) learners’ metalinguistic awareness, plurilingual competence, and bilingual skills that was accomplished through web collaboration. In the study, the authors also discussed the implications regarding web-based tandem language learning and peer-assisted web collaboration. The results showed that more than a third of the foreign language participants demonstrated metalinguistic awareness during online interaction with native speakers. The learners seemed to consciously connect target language learning to their prior knowledge of their mother tongues. During the web collaboration, all participants demonstrated bilingual skills (e.g., code switching). Consequently, the authors suggested web utilizing collaboration in a tandem learning form with the purpose of developing foreign language learners’ plurilingual competence as well as metalinguistic awareness. According to the authors, web collaboration costs less human and material resources in comparison with a traditional face-to-face learning, it benefits small foreign language programs and students in remote areas to practice foreign language learning with native-speakers.

Chapter eleven (pages 236252) of the volume is authored by Agnieszka Legutko and titles *Yiddish in the 21st Century: New Media to the rescue of endangered languages*. In this chapter, the author offers the first scholarly analysis of teaching the Yiddish language in the digital age. She further argues that



new media have a tremendous potential for rescuing endangered languages. The chapter investigates the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages of using digital technologies in teaching languages, as well as the ensuing challenges for teachers and students. It offers a brief overview of the history of the Yiddish language and culture by examining relatively new digital platforms as Yiddishpop.com, Mapping Yiddish New York, The Grosbard Project, Yiddish audio and visual materials available online, such as videos, sound archives, online newspapers and dictionaries, as well as distance learning opportunities. Legutko claims, “social media can serve as a very efficient way of promoting the less commonly taught language courses and reaching wider audiences.” (2016, p. 248). Also, several Yiddish language programmes and Yiddish organizations have their significant Facebook presence, e.g. Columbia University, Oxford University, Bard-YIVO and Vilnius Yiddish Summer Programs, Yiddish Book Center, In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies, etc. She concludes by stating that the Facebook pages and Twitter accounts dedicated to Yiddish have thousands of followers, which signals that social media outreach for less commonly taught languages has a promising potential.

Chapter twelve (pages 253276) of the volume is authored by Byung-jin Lim and Danielle O. Pyun and titles *Korean Foreign Language Learning: Videoconferencing with Native Speakers*. This chapter presents the intercultural and linguistic exchanges by foreign language learners in an exploratory study of Internet-based desktop videoconferencing between Korean learners at a university in the United States, and their counterparts at a South Korean college. The desktop videoconferencing project was designed for foreign language learners of Korean to assist in developing linguistic competence, as well as intercultural communicative competence, by providing the learners with the target language and culture through real-time, one-on-one communication. The study shows the emerging themes that recur in a video-chat. It also reports on the Korean language learners’ self-rated proficiency in their target language. The authors examined the challenges, for instance, the teachers and the students had to communicate closely with each other to schedule the videoconferencing throughout the semester due to the different institutional academic calendars and the time difference between the U.S. and Korea, and difficulties in video-conferencing (they dealt with quite a few technical difficulties in terms of connectivity) that was followed by a discussion of the effectiveness of synchronous one-on-one video-conferencing for language learning in general, and in Korean language education in particular. Lim and Pyun claim that “there is no doubt that this kind of collaborative and learner-centered online communication activity requires expanded roles and responsibilities from the teacher – a problem if the teacher has already been suffering from a lack of resources, time, and little to no support or help from their own institutions” (2016, p. 269). The authors finish off by suggesting “more comprehensive studies are needed in the uses of technology in language learning, and the effectiveness of the Internet-based technology on Korean language teaching” (2016, p. 270).

Chapter thirteen (pages 277297) of the volume is authored by Sawsan Abbadi and titles *Globalisation and possibilities or Intercultural Awareness: Multimodal Arabic Culture Portfolios at a Catholic University*. This chapter investigates the teaching and learning of Arabic at one Catholic university campus, with a focus upon the complex interactions between language and culture in a postmodern globalized context. It focuses on the use of “multimodal culture portfolios” as a means to engage students both linguistically and culturally in classroom and community discourses. Through their interactions and co-construction of knowledge with other participants, these students are invite to reflect upon the multiple communicative contexts that are shaping and being shaped by them. The results of the study are significant for enriching the general conversation on intercultural proficiency in classroom discourse, curricular decisions, roles and challenges of teachers, and the involvement in target language communities, particularly in less commonly taught languages such as Arabic. Abbadi claims that “culture portfolios are a mechanism that combines various aspects of content and task-based teaching with direct and indirect applications of critical language awareness as a pedagogical tool to problematize students’ understanding and awareness of ideological links between language, culture, identity, and power” (2016, p. 290). The author specifically highlights the significance of

the ideological connection between teaching Arabic as a foreign language in the U.S. and current rapid shifts in the global sociopolitical and cultural contexts between the U.S. and the Arab world.

Chapter fourteen (pages 296314) of the volume is authored by Latisha Mary and Andrea Young and titles *The Role of Multi-Media in Expanding Pre-Service Teachers' Understanding of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms and Furthering Their Professional Identities*. In this chapter Mary and Young present the results of a qualitative study conducted with pre-service elementary school student teachers enrolled in a Masters course on cultural and linguistic diversity at one university teacher education institute in France. The study aimed to evaluate the impact of the course on the student teachers' understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and questioned whether the use of multimedia resources throughout the course could contribute to fostering a greater sense of empathy towards their future culturally and linguistically diverse students. The results showed that the use of video in particular, in combination with theoretical readings, was highly instrumental in helping the students to understand the concepts linked to second language acquisition and in providing them with strategies for their linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. The authors nevertheless expressed their scepticism regarding the sufficiency in the use of multimedia in fostering a sense of empathy in students and suggested further pedagogical interventions.

Chapter fifteen (pages 315333) of the volume is authored by Haixia Liu, Wenhao Tao, and William Cain and titles *Investigating Mobile Assisted English Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in China: Issues, Attitudes and Perceptions*. In this chapter Liu, Tao and Cain present the results of their study on how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students in China spontaneously use apps for smartphone and tablets to support their informal language learning. The chapter also seeks to determine EFL teachers' perspectives on informal and formal Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The results of the survey showed that all participants were using apps to learn foreign languages informally. They further also revealed that the most frequently used apps were based on form-focused behaviourist activities rather than learner-centred constructivist activities. A comparison of usage between EFL teachers and students revealed no significant difference in their choice of apps; nevertheless, students expected guidance from EFL teachers in using apps and resources to facilitate language learning. Finally, while the survey data indicated EFL teachers had positive attitudes towards informal MALL, the interviews revealed that many of them held negative sentiments toward MALL in the classroom. Liu, Tao and Cain interpreted this discrepancy in attitudes as a reflection of the teachers' concerns about learners' self-control and autonomous learning skills, as well as concerns about required teachers' knowledge and perceived changes to teachers' roles.

Chapter sixteen (pages 334364) of the volume is authored by Lisa Winstead and titles *Mexican Heritage ELL and Native English Speaker Interaction: A Case Study of Tandem Language Learning Strategies*. In this chapter, Winstead presents her case study that firstly explored the potential of a dual language program that provides an English Language Learner (ELL) and a Spanish Learner (SL) with opportunities to engage in authentic as well as mutual language exchange and, secondly, the multiple types of language strategies employed by adolescents to teach and learn language from one another in tandem learning situations. Findings from a transcription analysis of 12 English and Spanish videotaped sessions of one dyad revealed novel and in depth information about strategies utilized in compensatory, administrative, and social ways to extend the flow of communication in tandem learning. Findings of the study indicated that tandem language learning not only provides a space for language learners to engage in plural strategies to promote teaching and learning, but also learner metacognition when peer learners employ interlingual and plurilingual measures to compensate for language gaps. The author also highlighted the implications of the study of online tandem language learning. Tandem language learning "provides a model from which to further analyze the study of tandem learning and the language strategies utilized by peers in face-to-face as well as online formats." (Winstead, 2016, p. 353). She also claims online tandem language scenarios to be inexpensive and can be utilized to promote language practice as well as inform instructor practice in

the field. Further, by utilizing tandem language learning, researchers can gain insights about language gaps and how to support learners in tandem scenarios.

The final chapter of the volume, chapter seventeen (pages 365-386) by Mohsen Shahrokhi and Shima Taheri titles *The Impact of Blog Peer Feedback on Improving Iranian English Foreign Language Students' Writing*. In this study, the authors aimed to investigate two issues, firstly, whether using blog peer feedbacks have any statistically significant effect on improving Iranian students' EFL writing skill, and, secondly, whether participants at different proficiency levels react differently to blog peer feedbacks, as far as their writing improvement is concerned. To this end, sixty Iranian female English Foreign Language (EFL) learners were selected based on their performance on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and were then divided into two groups. The first thirty-participant group was taught through the conventional face-to-face method; the second thirty-participant group, which consisted of the same proficiency level members as the first group, received blog peer feedbacks as the treatment. After three months of instruction, a post-test was administered and the results were subjected to statistical analysis. The analysis revealed that using blog peer feedbacks can have a statistically significant impact upon improving the writing skills of EFL learners.

The volume edited by Wang and Winstead offers a variety of high quality content which has become even more relevant and valuable due to the surge of the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, due to which many of the themes in the volume were somewhat neglected. We feel, though, that full attention should be given to the issue of language learning in the digital post-Covid age. The very detailed findings and literature on the latest developments in foreign language learning in the digital age offer valuable resources for both practitioners and researchers alike. The volume is also useful reference book for teachers beginners who might be technology-shy as well as for experienced language teachers who might have been forced to take on online courses virtually overnight.

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