

Editor's Notes

There is ample evidence that a shift towards more integration of web 2.0 in education is taking place, in particular in language teaching and learning. Surveys indicate that a growing number of schools in primary, secondary and higher education have access to web 2.0 tools, although how they are used to technologically-enhance the language learning process is a question that needs to be addressed. Quite often discussion of integration of technology focuses on specific practices, rather than considering the importance for teachers to critically assess the potential that technology holds for them to improve and innovate the language learning process of their pupils in a way that adjusts to emergent understandings of knowledge construction. These changes inevitably represent new challenges to educational stakeholders from many different angles, not least of which is how to prepare citizens to 'e-function' in an increasingly interconnected world in which 'knowledge' is non-linear, dynamic, and often 'crowd-sourced'. Dealing with new concepts of what it means to teach and to learn in digital environments denotes the need for more researchers willing to delve into these complex issues. With this spirit, the articles in this special issue volume take a close look at both theoretical underpinnings and real practices that aim to integrate technology and language learning as part of a continual social process of shared knowledge-building and communication.

Dr. Melinda Dooly
17 June 2015

Special Editor's Notes

In the last decades, considerable emphasis has been placed on integrating technology into language learning and teaching practices in institutions of higher education. With the development of technological tools that can be used in educational settings and also with an easier access to informational sources largely thanks to the Internet, "telecollaboration" between different groups of people around the world is now easily possible, and thus is gaining more popularity. However, despite the growing importance of technology in language learning and teaching, language classrooms have not yet fully adapted or integrated their curricula to the new digital context. There is still a need for more development of innovative technology-enhanced tasks that can be used in language classrooms to facilitate the language learning process as well as to help provide a positively enhanced learning experience to language learners.

This year's special issue of *BJTLL* is dedicated to technology-enhanced language learning and teaching at the university environment. The volume compiles a number of articles that highlight the importance of digital literacy in language classrooms and how technology-enhanced tasks, specifically multi-modal tasks can be integrated to the curricula to promote the language learning and teaching in various contexts. The first article of this volume is a contribution by special guest author, Dr. Malgorzata Kurek from Jan Długosz University, Poland, who discusses the key roles that tasks hold in structuring learner activities in complex learning environments (CLEs) of

tellecollaborative exchanges (also known as Intercultural Online Exchanges or IOEs). In addition to providing an overview of task-tool relationship and defining the concept of CLEs, Dr. Kurek emphasizes the importance of developing relevant and adequate task design in order to facilitate learning in CLEs and also suggests ways to train teachers in task design.

In the second article, Lidia Lemus and José Antonio Saura Rami discuss characteristics found in a collaborative interaction between two student teachers who are studying to become foreign language teachers (one in Spanish; the other in English as a foreign language). The authors' analysis is based on the theory of Conversational Analysis (CA) which, as they argue, can be used as an approach to the communication via text-chats because of the strong similarity between text-chat features and oral communication in face-to-face interaction (Tudini, 2010). The article explores the various impacts (e.g linguistic, socio-cultural) that the text-chats can have in the second language learning and task achievement. Authors provide an interesting analysis on how feedback between the two teachers of different language of training can facilitate learning and goal accomplishments during a telecollaborative task.

The next two articles emphasize the need to understand digital literacy and to adapt and integrate the curricula to the new digital context (Schmar-Dobler, 2003); specifically focusing on utilizing multi-modal tasks in language classrooms. Carolina Girón-García discusses the concept of "New literacy" and "New Technologies" in EFL settings and describes the unique characteristics found in digital texts in comparison to traditional texts. Girón-García argues that it is of high importance to develop more content-based materials using digital texts in the university curricula, and she introduces a "Cybertask", a task-based learning activity designed to engage students to search for information on a specific topic through the Internet. The case study on two students who participated in the study reveals a positive outcome on their increased understanding of the task and improved output.

Next, Jeanne Law Bohannon provides a brief overview on the history of multimodal teaching/learning practices, specifically focusing on the field of writing (composition) classes. Following this summary, Bohannon describes a mixed-method study, conducted with first-year STEM students at a state university, which investigated the effectiveness of multimodal composition tasks. The article highlights the importance of adapting students' feedback to the curricula and provides helpful suggestions to make multimodal assignments work, such as giving students tasks associated with clear, measurable learning outcomes.

The series of articles are followed by Lin Zhou's comprehensive review of the 2013 book *Computer-Assisted Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: Technological Advances*, edited by Zou et al. Zhou positively evaluates this book as a helpful resource for language teachers interested in finding out how to effectively use computers in the process of language teaching and learning.

The monograph concludes with an in-depth interview with one of the pioneers in the field of CALL – Dr. Randall Sadler, Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. On behalf of *BJTLL* as a special editor and also a student of his, I had an opportunity to interview Dr. Sadler. It was a valuable experience to learn more about his research (carried out in collaboration

with Dr. Dooly, UAB) and how CALL in relation to Virtual Worlds has been developing for the last few years. The innovative approaches to language learning and teaching using tasks created in Virtual Worlds have a lot of potential for further development, and it was enriching to learn how they could be used to teach even very young elementary students. Readers of *BJTLL* will definitely learn much from the interview as Dr. Sadler shares the “peaks and valleys” in his experience as a pioneering scholar in the field and also shows the potential this field has for future research.

Lastly, as a special editor of this issue, I would like to thank the authors of this monograph for their contributions and valuable insights to the field of language learning and teaching. I’d also like to thank Dr. Dooly and Dr. Sadler for their continuous support throughout the journey.

Ha Ram (Hannah) Kim

English Placement Test (EPT) Research Assistant

Department of Linguistics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

June 13, 2015

Works cited

- Schmar-Dobler, E. (2003, September). Reading on the Internet: The link between literacy and technology. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 47(1). Retrieved 11 June 2015 from http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/lit_index.asp?HREF=/newliteracies/jaal/9-03_column/index.html
- Tudini, V. (2010) *Online second language acquisition: A conversation analysis of online chat*. London: Continuum.

Credits:

Illustrations for the covers of each issue are designed by students of EINA (Escola de Disseny i Art, Barcelona) studying in the postgraduate course ‘Il·lustració Creativa’, under the direction of Sonia Pulido, teacher of Illustration for Publishing Media.

Reviewers for Volume 8.2

The editors would like to thank the following reviewers for their contribution to the preparation of Volume 8.2:

Sea Hee Choi (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Victor Corona (Université de Lyon), Juan Jose Reyes Valladares (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Sònia Sierra (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and Maria Àngels Llanes Baró (Universitat de Lleida).