

## Book Review

**Book Editors:** Alessia Plutino, Kate Borthwick, & Erika Corradini **Book Title:** *New Educational Landscapes: Innovative Perspectives in Language Learning and Technology* **Year of Publication:** 2019 **Publisher:** Voillans, France: Research-publishing.net. **Book Pages:** 92 **ISBN:** 978-2-490057-47-4 **Price:** \$15.30

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### Innovative Perspectives in Language Learning and Technology

*New Educational Landscapes: Innovative Perspectives in Language Learning and Technology* is an edited book by Alessia Plutino, Kate Borthwick, and Erika Corradini. It presents a collection of research studies on contemporary technologies and their use in teaching languages. There are twelve research studies in the book, and the topics covered in these studies are mostly based on game-based language learning and teaching, constructing online communities, intercultural competence in online environment, and virtual reality. It is a great book inspiring educators, students and curriculum designers to experiment with new challenges that technology poses in the field of language teaching.

The book starts with an introduction section and the editors did not give this section a chapter number. *Introduction – Symposium Short Papers* was written by the editors and provides information about the content of the book. The volume opens with some reflections on how teachers and curriculum designers are making use of the up-to-date technologies in various educational settings. It is quite easy to understand and follow the ideas since all of the research studies presented in the book have the necessary section that good research studies would have such as introduction, method, results, discussion, conclusions, recommendations, and references sections.

Chapter 1 focuses on virtual reality in education. *Multilingual Immersive Communication Technology: Repurposing Virtual Reality for Italian Teaching* is a pilot study conducted by Billy Brick, Tiziana Cervi-Wilson, Sean Graham, Tsvetan Tsankov, Michael Loizou, Nina Godson, and Kelly Ryan. In this section, an experiment with Virtual Reality (VR) project resetting a purpose for health care students in health sciences. In the study, the importance of providing students with a non-threatening environment is emphasized in order to develop the basic skills they need throughout all their careers. This pilot study proves that VR could be repurposed by replacing the audio and the texts with the audios and texts from other languages. This is mainly suggested for creating new language learning resources.

Next, the study in Chapter 2 is titled *A Study on Technology-based Speech Assistants* and was conducted by Serpil Meri-Yılan. Based on the data collected in April 2018, the researcher obtains students' perspectives on their learning language experience with two technology-based speech recognition programs that are ImmerseMe and English Language Speech Assistant (ELSA). The research was a qualitative design, and the participants were five university-level students who were expected to complete activities in ImmerseMe and ELSA. ImmerseMe was used to improve their English and other languages, while ELSA was utilized to improve their English. In the data collection phase, the researcher observed and interviewed the participants. The questions focused on learners' experience with those programs. The results indicated

that students had opposite views on these programs in terms of their benefits for improving language and some drawbacks they encountered. Implications were provided to students, teachers, institutions, and designers for using Speech Recognition Technology (SRT) to improve students' speaking and listening skills.

The following two chapters (i.e., Chapters 3 and 4) are about gamified learning. Christiana Markanastasakis focuses on EAP students' vocabulary learning in *Vocabulary Kingdom: Gamified EAP Vocabulary Acquisition Using Blended Learning*. The chapter emphasizes the necessity of working on academic vocabulary to communicate ideas effectively and clearly. It is claimed that vocabulary acquisition is ignored even though most scholars accept the fact that vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to any language learning. This understanding may be because of such factors as vocabulary intensity, time pressure, and the constraints exposed by high stakes EAP courses that are aimed for preparing students for the next stage in their academic career. In this chapter, the researcher uses Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a framework and observes students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while they use Vocabulary Kingdom. It is important to note that intrinsic motivation is related to one's competence, autonomy, and relatedness, while extrinsic motivation is associated with measurable outcomes such as rewards. According to the researcher's observations, Vocabulary Kingdom increased both motivation types as students play game and improved their academic vocabulary. The other chapter about gamified learning is *MISSION BERLIN – A Mobile Gamified Exploration of a New Educational Landscape* by Bart Pardoel, Salomi Papadima-Sophocleous, and Androulla Athanasiou. The unique side of this study is that it focuses completely on gamified foreign language learning courses in secondary schools even though there have been studies on the use of games for language learning or teaching. MISSION BERLIN is a technology-assisted online gamified language course for A1 German as a foreign language (GFL) students. In this exploratory study, this course was created and implemented to understand the affordances of mobile gamification in teaching foreign languages. In total, 39 students participated and the researchers recorded 45,003 clicks that took place as student interactions on Moodle website for this gamified course. These interaction instances included student work submission, group challenge activities, document viewing, answering questions, or moving from one stage to the other. Results indicated some playing patterns and actions, and also high activity and low activity groups of students were compared. While high activity students utilized MISSION BERLIN in their free time and school time, low activity students tried to play the game during school hours.

In Chapter 5, *A Deep Linguistic Computer-Assisted Language Learning Game for Italian*, Jessica Zipf describes the initial steps in her project in order to bring scholars from different fields to design a computer assisted language learning game. She utilized lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), a framework of grammar in second language acquisition (SLA). She concludes with her plan to include grammar and learning materials in a student-friendly environment to improve students' learning. Next, Chapter 6, *Using Online Volunteer Translation Communities for Language Learning in Formal Education* by Anna Comas-Quinn, takes the readers one step further and explains how online formal education communities may act as communities outside classrooms. The author provides information on the studies utilized TED Translators and explains how she made use of these translators for her project. She concludes with making recommendations regarding teachers' roles in guiding students to use such tools to construct an online community.

Chapter 7, *BMELTET – Blending MOOCs into English Language Teacher Education with Telecollaboration*, by Marina Orsini-Jones and Abraham Cerveró Carrascosa, and Chapter 10, *Telecollaboration in the Foundation Year Classroom: the 'Global Student Collective,'* by Lucy Watson focus on telecollaboration activities among students and student teachers. The first one included student teachers from the U.K. communicating with their peers from Spain on both synchronous and asynchro-

nous MOOC content, while the second study included participants from the U.S., Brazil, India, Hungary, and Italy communicating through a closed Facebook group as well as videoconferencing. It was reported in both studies that the participants positively commented on their experience, yet there were also challenges related to intercultural competence and devoting time for communication.

The next two chapters focus more on the cultural aspect of utilizing technology in classrooms. In Chapter 8, *Design Recommendations to Address Cultural Issues in Multicultural MOOCs: A Systematic Literature Review*, Rana Shahini, Hugh C. Davis, and Kate Borthwick conduct a systematic literature review. Results indicate that cultural factors are the most significant factors affecting learning and teaching because of the multicultural environment created by students from all over the world in online communities. Thus, they suggest using dynamic design and flexible pathways and content while utilizing MOOCs as a community where learners and teachers construct meaning. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the literature review on multicultural online environments and researchers conducting studies on similar areas should definitely read it. Furthermore, Chapter 9, *The Lights and Shadows of Intercultural Exchange Projects for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Development: Analysis and Comparison of Online Case Studies* by Marta Fondo and Pedro Jacobetty does a similar job to the previous chapter in that cultural aspects are investigated. The researchers examine and compare the findings of two parallel online exchange projects. The two projects have unique aspects and readers are provided with detailed information on these aspects. Telecollaboration practitioners might benefit from this research study because it also provides information about positive and negative outcomes while implementing the two projects.

Chapter 11, *What I did on my Holidays: Digital Fieldtrips and Digital Literacies* by Sarah Fielding, focuses on a web-based mixed reality software called Thinglink. This is a browser-based software to which educators and students can subscribe and experience 360° interactive tours online. Even though this chapter is not a very structured research study, the author asserts that she will be piloting this web-based mixed-reality software and it may pose important pedagogical implications such as teachers' developing 3D activities for their students or conducting assessments on student improvement as they create their own resources with this software. This may also lead to deeper and more autonomous learning. Thus, this study could be considered one of the cutting-edge technology papers in the future.

The last chapter, *"What is this Place?" –Using Screencasts to Guide International Students Around the Virtual Learning Environment* by Michael Salmon mostly focuses on the problems encountered by international students in their experiences with Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and how these problems were decreased through the application of screencast videos. International students may have navigational and linguistic barriers in using VLEs, and this may be because students do not receive enough feedback and guidance when they are first introduced into VLEs. In this study, Michael Salmon provides a narrative account of a teaching and site design intervention in which screencast videos were utilized to demonstrate international students how to navigate between pages. The researcher counted the views on screencast videos featuring different sections such as how to access TED Talks, how to use Quizlet etc. The results obtained from student feedback indicated that these videos helped the international students navigate easily and understand the process better because the videos were able to be watched repeatedly. Even though this study is a significant one in terms of its purpose and pinpointing a crucial topic such as the challenges international students face, the design and reporting the results could have been more structured.

## Conclusion

Overall, *New Educational Landscapes: Innovative Perspectives in Language Learning and Technology* is an invaluable book since it presents a good collection of papers related to innovative and creative technology use and teaching approaches. The book provides readers with clear descriptions of each research study including all the key parts of a research such as methodology, findings, discussions and references. There are also implications and suggestions sections for future use. However, several improvements could be made for such an innovative book. First, chapters are not specified in the table of contents and this makes the readers job difficult. It is hard to navigate between chapters because there are no chapter numbers. In addition, some chapters could be combined under different parts. For example, Chapter 7 and 10 focus on telecollaboration but they are not in the right order. In addition, Chapter 8, 9, and 12 focus on intercultural issues; however, they are not handled together. Thus, we recommend making some format, style, and order changes. Last, if each chapter author could include more implications for teaching languages, the book could be used as a perfect guide in online teaching, especially in the era of COVID-19. Such a book is definitely a great contribution to our understanding of contemporary technologies that could be utilized in teaching languages.

## References

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