Preface

The study of the use of computer-based systems in language learning has become one productive field of research in the last years, under the name of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The use of computers in language learning spans throughout a 60-year period (Stockwell, 2007), from drill-based exercises to the current social media solutions for language learning, such as the use of podcasts, digital games and social networks (Chirimbu & Tafazoli, 2013). While the literature on technology-enhanced language learning has been developed in the last decades continuously, the focus on multiculturalism within the field has not been addressed until the last years (May & Sleeter, 2010; Rasmussen, Nichols, & Ferguson, 2006). In this book, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning is considered under the perspective of cultural and ethnic diversity of multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010). The current awareness of multiculturalism as part of our society has led to consider its implications for language learning from a research-oriented perspective, especially in relation to the use of social networking technologies and other web based applications in which a diversity of learners interact together with a purpose of language learning. However, the educational technologies and the language learning materials that are more commonly used in the classroom for language learning takes little consideration of multiculturalism and tends to adopt a centralized perspective which ignores diversity. Educational technologies are produced by editorials situated in developed countries, often located in big cities. This centralization of the production of educational technologies in high-developed cities, tends to create a bias in the representation of the resources for persons who does not live in similar contexts or who are part of minorities underrepresented in the editorial teams (Romero & Loos, 2015). Educational technologies and contents produced in developed countries are after distributed in other contexts without considering the need for more diversity. Distributed technologies and learning resources production could be one of the strategies to overcome this difficulty. Gabaudan chapter shows an example by engaging students as producers of digital audio-visual clips for independent language learning while Barnes chapters’ shows the opportunities of educational social networks for encouraging communication in a way that empower the learner in the active role of language learning. The different activities described in the book points to different activities that could support more distributed language learning resources and activities that could help overcome the centralization of educational technologies production and their socio-cultural bias.

The importance of addressing multiculturalism in education is undeniable in the current moment and language learning is one of the educational fields where multiculturalism is especially important because of the relations between the way languages are used and the socio-cultural expressions that are sustained through language (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2013; Reynolds, 2014; Zamel & Spack, 2012). For this reason, this book could be highly valuable not only for language learning professionals in the field (language teachers, language therapists) but also for all the professionals in the educational field who
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aim to have a state-of-the-art overview of the implications and opportunities in the field of technology enhanced language learning with a sensitivity to multiculturalism approaches.

The chapters published within this book are centered on a multitude of themes related to language learning where technology is considered for enhancing the teaching or the learning process. The book provides a large overview of the diversity of technologies that can be used for supporting language learning, including educational social media tools (Barnes), learning managements systems such Moodle (Yang), vodcasts (Sadeghi & Ghorbani) or web-based e-learning solutions (Naidoo). The book also shows a great diversity of horizons including studies from different countries, including Australia (Barnes), Taiwan (Yang), India (Ahluwalia & Gupta), South Africa (Naidoo), Iran (Sadeghi & Ghorbani), Ireland (Gabaudan), Spain (Bañares-Marivela & Rayón-Rumayor), Slovakia (Cimermanova), Thailand (Kasemsap) or Turkey (Bekleyen & Çelik). The diversity of methodologies, technological approaches to technology enhanced learning and origins of the different chapters of the book ensures a diversity of perspectives that goes beyond the mainstream orientations in Computer Assisted Language learning (CALL) and demonstrate the importance of adapting the integration of technology according to the specific social and educational specificities of each group of learners.

The book is structured in 16 chapters, starting by the analysis of educational social media tools (Barnes) and finishing by pointing to the challenges that faces e-learning solutions in the field of CALL (Naidoo).

The first chapter by Barnes highlights the opportunities of social media for supporting communication in educational settings. Among the different types of social media, Barnes focus his analysis on educational social media tools and provides concrete evidences on the use of these media for supporting language learning through the use of community oriented tools.

In the second chapter, Yang investigates English self-efficacy and writing performance among EFL college learners using the Learning Management System Moodle. The writing activity is supported through a computer-based journal in Moodle.

Ahluwalia and Gupta explores in the third chapter the impact of technologies for improving writing skills of engineering students. The chapter provides an analysis of a case study in which the writing activity of engineering students is supported through web based technologies to help them develop better strategies to describe their activities.

The fourth chapter by Bañares-Marivela and Rayón-Rumayor is focused on the use of mobile learning through the use of the iPad tablet. The authors focus on the potentialities of iPad tablets to support multimodal narratives which combines not only text-based activities but also multimedia elements to develop new strategies for second language teaching and learning among Spanish learners.

The fifth chapter showcases an innovative use of the popular TED talk’s format for developing oral skills in English as a Foreign Language. Sadeghi and Ghorbani analyses the use of TED vodcast for developing oral proficiency among Iranian EFL Learners’ and discusses the opportunities of this strategy based on their successful experience.

Gabaudan provides in Chapter 6 one of the most promising strategies for technology enhanced learning (TEL) in general, and technology enhanced language learning, in particular: learning by creating content. The approach of engaging students as producers of digital audio-visual clips is not only a way to engage them in the creative use of technologies but also a way to ensure their engagement in the learning process. Gabaudan discusses her experience in the process of engaging students as content producers and provides cues to consider to develop similar experiences.
Yeromin and Charskykh from Ukraine focus on the seventh chapter on sub-lingual communication as a part of the communication which is not directly related to the content that is transmitted but to the audio-visual codes that are used when communicating. They aim to highlight the importance of developing sub-lingual communication in Higher Education specially in the context of second and foreign languages.

In Chapter 8, Sahragard and Meihami, from Shiraz University in Iran, considers intercultural competence and its relation to language learning by combining a sociocultural perspective for Computer-Assisted Language Learning.

Kızıl and Kilimci develop in Chapter 9 a quasi-experimental study on collocations, which they define as a group of co-occurring words, in the context of language learning. The use of collocations is one of the most frequent mistakes in language learning according to the authors. For this reason, they propose to teach collocations through web-based solution to sustain concordancing.

In Chapter 10, Kasemsap from Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand provides a large overview on the use of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning, which allows the reader to know about different technologies for supporting the teaching and learning process.

Akayoglu and Seferoglu from Turkey uses the 3D role-play environment Second Life to analyze social presence in the context of task based language activities. In Chapter 11, the use of Second Life is considered as a support for a higher degree of social presence perception in a situation of distributed learners which can collaborate and act as avatars through Second Life environment.

In Chapter 12, Golzari, Azadsarv and Kia Heirati from Iran, analysis technology-enhanced vocabulary development by comparing two models: the semantic network and the syntactic structure model. The semantic network development model considers learners develop their vocabulary by establishing semantic relations between words. The syntactic structure development model is based in the seminal work of Chomsky. The authors explores through the use of technologies both models and discusses them through the lens of technology applications.

Adults’ attitudes towards the use of technologies for preparing a language test is the focus of Chapter 13 by Bekleyen and Çelik from Dicle University in Turkey. The authors considers adults attitudes to be an important factor when accepting to using a technology-enhanced language learning solution and discusses the importance of developing a better awareness on the adults’ attitudes to CALL.

In Chapter 14, Azad from Iran, highlight the importance of assessment and suggest the implementation of dynamic assessment as a way to better support and regulate the language teaching and learning when using multimedia tools.

Cimermanova from University of Presov in Slovakia develops in Chapter 15 an overview on the current uses and researches in the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning in Slovakia and the current limits on the actual uses.

In Chapter 16, Naidoo from University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, discusses the current barriers and challenges in the use of e-learning for language teaching and learning based on the literature review but also on the experiences in the context of South Africa.

The categories, topics and themes introduced are by no means mutually exclusive. As you will discover by reading this book, the chapters are intertwined with one another for providing a global picture of technology enhanced learning in a context of multiculturalism. This plurality of methods, research topics, and sites for intensive investigative inquiries constitutes the multi-faceted character of the Computer Assisted Language learning (CALL) community in its present form. It also allows us to consider technology-enhanced learning as a powerful terrain of experimentation to enhance, prolong and invest in the language learning process across the lifespan (Bongaerts, Van Summeren, Planken, & Schils, 1997;
Roberts & Kreuz, 2015). With a multiculturalism approach at its core, the book presents a portrait of research that integrates different technologies and educational approaches to advance in the research and educational practices to make language learning more diverse and inclusive.

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REFERENCES


