

Introduction

Technologies and Second Languages

Tecnologías y segundas lenguas

Guest-edited special issue:

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In an era of technological revolution, technologies and their effective use and consumption as well as the ability to communicate in one or more second languages contribute to connecting users in this globalized world. Our communicative spaces have expanded exponentially and therefore require appropriate training. Digital media can promote students' independent learning, both inside and outside the modern languages classroom, but they always require the guidance of an expert.

Communicative competence in several languages -especially English, Spanish and Chinese- and digital competence are essential skills that open access and mobility within the job market in the 21st century. However, we still have much to learn about the true impact of this on second language teaching and learning. In addition, this type of research is even of more interest for a large group of teachers, which is increasing in number and connectivity, that are willing to use ICT in their classrooms as a lever for change.

The use of educational technology in learning a foreign language has evolved considerably. Learning modern languages is based, roughly, on a process of communicative interaction that leads to the development of language skills. Initially, computer-aided language learning programs involved the possibility of developing students' individual and autonomous work to reinforce gaps and find solutions on the move (personalized learning and adaptive learning), especially for the development of written skills. Gradually, the applications have moved to the internet networks, which can help anyone expand their information skills enabling them to search for content on the internet and databases. In language learning, the omnipresence of internet network(s) has obliged networked learning to focus increasingly on collaborative learning guided by experts: thanks to the evolution of Web 2.0 to Web 3.0, ICT use impacts further on increasing interaction and collaboration beyond the classroom walls with other native or non-native speakers. An especially interesting aspect for language learning is the possibility of developing collaborative learning projects that connect learners in different national and linguistic contexts (internationalisation and cooperation in language teaching through technology).

This evolution towards the collaborative pole has most benefited the development of oral skills. The use of virtual reality and augmented reality, applications such as Skype, Hangout, podcasts, video games, virtual platforms and interactive whiteboards are, among others, digital resources available to teachers and students for producing and receiving "oral" texts, both mono-managed and pluri-managed. Apps, for example, are like the new textbooks for learning languages.

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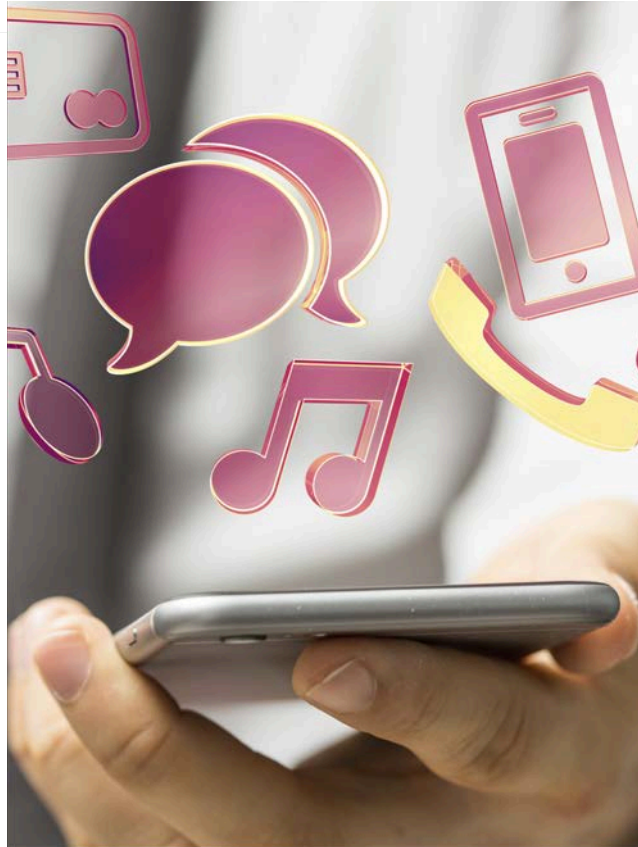
On the other hand, the classic distinction between input and output in the language classroom overlaps with the idea of prosumer student: Users have become recipients and consumers at the same time, so that written skills are now working in a more collaborative way thanks to resources such as blogs, digital murals, wikis, emails, Facebook, Twitter ...

Moreover, BYOD (bring your own device) has become fashionable: the ubiquity of mobile devices (tablets, iPads, phones, laptops, etc.) allows use anywhere and at anytime, which may facilitate communication (ubiquitous learning and lifelong learning) and has revolutionized education for both students (or users) and staff (or guardians). These are both users of technology –in the private and professional environment equally, for teaching and for their own lifelong learning– and managers of their students' usage experience.

However, it remains to be seen whether the impact of new technologies differs according to the type of student, the teacher type, the type of competition, the resource type and the type of learning environment. It seems that so far we have invested more in technological resources than in ideas for deciding how to use those resources to the best possible degree (Trujillo, 2014).

Indeed, ICTs represent a whole industry that invests constantly in researching and developing a host of new products, artifacts and new formats in a clear example of what Innerarity (2011) calls heterochrony: "The world is moving at different speeds, so that breaklines continuously appear between the different dynamics of innovation ... the temporal logics are different, incompatible and even antagonistic. Fashion time does not match the time of religion, nor technology the time of law, nor economy the time of politics, nor the ecosystem the time of consumption". According to Trujillo (2014), the relationship between education and technology must follow two fundamental maxims: firstly, education needs primacy over technology; on the other hand, technology, as one part of the social sphere, must be present in space and educational performance.

The central question is if the time of technology coincides with the time of education. In this issue, we try to answer this question through the conclusions of five studies selected carefully from the 75 manuscripts that were received. In each article, authors from five different countries belonging to three different continents, evaluate the quality of ICT educational practices by taking into account the following variables: the type of resource, the type and teaching level, the type of content and metacognitive skills, the type of output, the type of learner(s), and the type of teacher(s). The five articles introduce different innovative approaches to the topic: subtitles, digital pen, tablet, whatsapp, social networks and develop-



ment of local digital tools; in secondary and in tertiary levels; for oral and written skills, as regards cognitive and affective development, the learner and/or the teacher.

Wong, Sing-Chai y Poh-Aw used social networks to foster language learning in Singapore. They present the concept of «seamless learning», an emergent model that promotes the connection of learning activities in different formal and informal spaces. Results suggest the potential efficacy for students' gradual acculturation to become active L2 users in an authentic everyday social configuration.

Kruger, Doherty y Soto-Sanfiel describe the effects of subtitles in their original version on the native and foreign viewer in Australian and Spanish universities. They show that subtitles do not reduce immersion measures and that they produce better results in terms of conveyance of narrative, identification with characters and perception of realism. Results also show that the experimental conditions or the receiver's language do not affect presence and enjoyment. Finally, they conclude that conveyance is the most significant measure of immersion because it produces the strongest and most consistent correlations, and is a significant variable that predicts viewers' enjoyment.

Izquierdo, De-la-Cruz-Villegas, Aquino-Zúñiga, Sandoval-Caraveo y García-Martínez's study examines the use of technology in the daily pedagogical practices of Mexican secondary English teachers and the resources they normally have in their schools. Their quantitative and qualitative data identify the multimedia and mobile resources that teachers use on a daily basis in their classrooms. However, different factors related to the state school system and the educational contexts influence teachers' preference in using their own technological artifacts such as personal laptops, smartphones or multimedia resources.

Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez analyse the benefits of communication using WhatsApp to develop the oral skills of university students from Almería (Spain). The study reveals significant improvement of students' oral skills; negotiation of meaning was the most common language episode while interacting. Students were capable of negotiating meaning and evaluating their own performance through authentic interaction and feedback.

Finally, from Belgium, Van-Hove, Vanderhoven and Cornillie describe the results of a study with secondary students who learnt French vocabulary on a tablet through three modalities: multiple choice activities, typing, and writing by means of a stylus. Results show that students who practiced vocabulary with a stylus or pen or by typing obtained higher results in spelling and use of diacritics than the students who had practiced by means of multiple choice. The authors conclude that the amount of time spent at a higher processing level while learning vocabulary positively influences students' vocabulary acquisition.

The topicality of the subject addressed in this special issue leaves open the need for more studies about the impact of digital environments not only on the cognitive but also on the affective development of second language learning. This possibility of global communication affects the transformation of ethical responsible citizens into critical and truly global citizens, although it still needs more systematization. However, these different studies give us a glimpse of what is happening with respect to technologies and second languages in the world.