Technology Enhanced Language Learning: Connective Theory and Practice
by Aisha Walker and Goodith White,
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Recent advances in technology offer huge potential to enhance language learning, accelerating a trend that began with the humble tape player, the overhead projector and the video cassette recorder.

Such innovations now seem quaint given the extent to which information technology has revolutionized language learning. Yet the response from most language teachers is often confusion and unease: keeping abreast of technological advances is one thing, taking the time to integrate them in the learning experience quite another. This situation is compounded by the bewildering array of acronyms and jargon that make up the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) world, leaving most foundering over distinguishing MMPOGS from MOOCs, CMC from CAT, LMS from VLE, and going viral from going virtual.

Technology Enhanced Language Learning: Connecting Theory and Practice seeks to decode the jargon and present a way for language teachers to grasp both the underlying theory of language learning through technology and its transformative impact on the learning process. Much of the book is devoted to examining how technology can be implemented by teachers to enhance learning. The book is largely successful in its aims.

Chapter 1 charts the development of CALL. Structural/restricted CALL took the grammar translation model and replicated it in a series of computerized 'closed' questions and consequent feedback, with accuracy stressed as an objective. Communicative or 'open' CALL was inspired by communicative language teaching in providing more open-ended interactions, with fluency the goal. Integrated CALL is what we are fast approaching, when technology has become so integral to the way we live that it strips CALL of meaning: all language learning now involves technology. The authors suggest that technology, however much it is inseparable from everyday life, should still be understood as an activity requiring mediation.

With the increasing number of electronic devices available that can be used for language learning purposes CALL ought to be replaced by an all-encompassing term, 'Technology Enhanced Language Learning' (TELL). TELL implies that technology does not merely

assist language learning, it is one of many areas in which language exists and is used, with important consequences, the authors maintain.

There are still many decisions as to how to integrate technology within the classroom. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the forms of communication that digital technology allows. This seems a little unnecessary given how far technology is seeped into the lives of all. The same is true of the space given to discussing the implications for teachers. Technology offers more autonomy over learning, and using technology within the classroom may disrupt the traditional teacher-student relationship, with teachers learning from students, and students from each other. Crucially, the challenge for teachers is to channel this fact and ensure that technology enhanced language learning remains productive. The authors point out that while face-to-face communication remain central to classroom interaction, it is joined by digital-mediated interaction beyond the classroom, involving different structure, syntax, and mores. TELL brings different challenges and opportunities.

The authors then outline various ways technology may be used. In mirroring spoken language, the written language of SNS and online chatting may provide a way for students to be more confident 'real-life' speakers. Technology also allows the opportunity to practice speaking within a non-intimidating environment. Group chats and video conferencing technology can connect learners with native speakers of a similar age and improve their listening and speaking skills. All this seems obvious. More worthwhile is the chapter on reading skills. Teachers should be aware that technology can enliven the reading component of a language course by making the reading process less solitary and linear and more interact and collaborative. Digital texts can also incorporate a writing component, allowing reader to summarize, reflect on and review passages read.

The chapter on writing skills provides a comprehensive survey of the many opportunities that digital technology provides. We have moved far beyond the humble word processor. A range of tools is available for students – online encyclopedia, citation aids, templates, and in-built spell and grammar checkers, dictionaries and thesaurus. For the teacher there are plagiarism checkers, electronic editing apps, cloud services, and learning management systems that speed up the submission, grading, and returning of student written work. Again, technology is allowing students more autonomy; in the composition and editing of written work, blogs and collaborative writing may push the teacher to the sidelines, yet this should not mean the teacher is redundant. The authors tend to neglect this factor, that the teacher should strive to guide and monitor technology enhanced writing just as they guide and monitor more conventional forms.

The chapters on assessment and choosing and using materials prove must useful. Technology assisted assessment offers undoubted convenience and efficiency, yet the authors stress that teachers seeking to implement it should always grapple with issues of reliability and validity. Teachers should strive for consistency when assessing

qualitative tasks by using well-thought-out criteria; validity is an issue if that the teacher grades students' technological competence rather than the technology mediated task itself. In choosing materials, the onus is on the teacher to judge the learning potential of technology rather than how 'fun' or popular the technology is to students. Teachers should select software according to its appropriateness. This involves assessing its operation (does the classroom have the necessary equipment and how does the software work), the 'fit' in terms of the teacher's competence and teaching objectives, the learners' level and needs, and how far it can be integrated into the curriculum. This chapter provides a valuable way for teachers to decide the what and when of technology enhanced learning, as useful to the novice as to the seasoned technology user.

Technology Enhanced Language Learning offers the non-specialist a way to appreciate the problems and potential of technology use for language learning, as well as useful advice on how it may be used to empower both student and teacher, and crucially, enhance learning.