What Teachers and Students Can Learn from Exploring Technology Use In the Classroom

Over the past couple of decades a lot has been said about technology and its role in the classroom in general, and in the language classroom in particular. Numerous books and articles have been published about technology, and many different online programs, software, and now gaming and apps have been created for educational use. It can get overwhelming to read so many publications, let alone to sort through and decide which technology is useful for which type of classroom. In addition to the scope and diversity of discussions in scholarly and teaching publications, there is also pressure on teachers to use technology, sometimes without appropriate prior training provided for them, or a clear understanding of exactly how technology can aid language learning. Graduate teacher education programs are yet to use simulations to teach and train their students (future teachers) how to use technology most effectively in diverse classrooms. This special issue of the NYS TESOL *Journal* is meant to shed some light on technology—its potential, current, and future uses. Specifically, we aim to provide a good resource for practicing teachers. We hope that by reading the articles in this issue, teachers in diverse schools and classrooms can recognize something that could work well for their students.

In this special issue, we are happy to have had the opportunity to feature two invited articles. In the first article, Hung, deHaan, and Lee explore the existing evidence on how digital games can be and have been used in language learning, with particular focus on studies that originated from outside the United States. Focusing on three kinds of interactions—game-player, player-player, and player-online community— the authors demonstrate various ways games have been used to promote language learning that produces benefits, such as community building. However, they also point out some drawbacks, such as cognitive overload. The authors conclude their article by cautioning educators: they should not assume that video games can effectively be used in the classroom without significant modification and scaffolding. In our second invited article, Jacob, Nguyen, Tofel-Grehl, Richardson, and Warschauer tackle the complex but fascinating concept of computational thinking as it relates to the teaching of English learners (ELs). These students are rarely granted access or opportunity to engage with the skills involved in computational thinking, such as automation, abstraction, algorithmic thinking, modularization, and data analysis. The authors draw attention to the challenges that teachers need to overcome when teaching computational thinking to ELs, such as providing the necessary scaffolds, facing stereotypes of who should be studying this subject, and adopting a culturally sensitive pedagogy. The authors present two examples of recent initiatives that aim to meet student needs by actively involving ELs in hands-on and experiential activities that foster the acquisition of computational thinking.

In our regular Feature Article, Tseng examines student perspectives on the implementation of online news media in an English as a Foreign Language Setting. Through experiencing a project-based learning approach, 33 intermediate to high-intermediate students in a university in Taiwan reported gains in their perceived effectiveness for content and language learning when using online news media to acquire vocabulary, to retell and summarize the story in their own words, to practice listening comprehension, and to experiment with writing in the genre of a broadcast news script. Given students' positive views, the author highly recommends the use of online news media as a source of authentic input, especially when combined with collaborative tasks within project work.

In the Brief Reports section of this issue, Vicentini and de Oliveira present "Using Technology Tools in Writing Instruction." This literature review examines current technologies that support writing instruction in the classroom. The technologies are categorized according to their uses and benefits for teaching and learning writing. This literature review will be useful to practitioners who want to learn more about using available technologies to support writing instruction.

The Materials Review by Marshall is appropriately based on online resources. It features a review of a website that provides free online workshops for K–12 educators working with multilingual learners. The website, which is sponsored by the International Consortium for Multilingual Excellence in Education (ICMEE), offers workshops for teachers and administrators in diverse subjects, as well as a series of podcasts by multilingual educators and researchers. The review offers practical advice on how and when to sign up for the workshops and considers the strengths and weaknesses of the website compared to similar for-pay services.

Finally, we present a Readers' Comments and Views article. Lin and Parmar's "Broadening the Sociocultural Context in Plagiarism" is a response to the "call to action" of Benesch's "Feeling Rules and Emotion Labor: Tools of English Language Teacher Engagement" (Volume 5/1). Drawing on their own experience as ESL instructors in higher education, the authors construct the argument that in order to harness and build on today's multilingual youths' complex, transcultural literacy practices, we need to understand the wide array of social and cultural variables that shape them. Inviting English language learners' more active participation in a culturally specific academic discourse community entails incorporating a vision of diversity and inclusion into a campus-wide, sociocultural approach to addressing plagiarism.

In closing, we hope that our readers will find this issue on technology informative and stimulating, and, above all, useful for daily classroom teaching. It has been our pleasure working with authors and reviewers for this issue. As Editor-in-Chief, I wish to thank the NYSTJ editorial staff that who worked hard to put all the necessary pieces together. Special thanks go to our production team.

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