

Review of *New technologies and language learning*

Lucas Kohnke, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

New technologies and language learning

Li, L.

2017

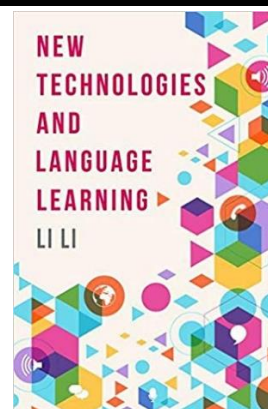
ISBN: 978-1137517678

US \$ 37.99

256 pp.

Palgrave

London, UK



Li's *New Technologies and Language Learning* is an essential reading for undergraduates and postgraduates as well as an excellent resource for academics involved with the use of new technologies for language learning. Technology has become nearly ubiquitous for language learning in many classrooms around the world, and it is continuing to spread rapidly as new technologies become increasingly available (Golonka, 2014) and more incorporated into the curriculum (Chun, Kern, & Smith, 2016). This research-led textbook combines theoretical discussion with practical guidelines on technology in language education. *New Technologies and Language Learning* addresses the existing need for teachers (pre-service, in-service), students (undergraduate, graduate), and researchers to gain insight into the multifaceted area of how new technologies can be utilized in language education. The book has a particular focus on linking theories to practice. It is the practical aspect of this book that sets it aside from recent publications on new theories and developments in the field (see Chappelle & Sauro, 2017; Farr & Murray, 2016). The book provides inspirational ideas to teachers who wish to integrate technologies in a variety of contexts.

New Technologies and Language Learning is divided into three main parts with nine total chapters. Each chapter starts with clear aims, outlining the themes and sections to be discussed. Moreover, each chapter includes several tasks, such as critical questions that prompt readers to think reflectively and draw them into the discussion. Part 1 presents an overview of seminal work and recent research on technologies in language education and second language acquisition to provide a foundation for readers. Part 2 presents an overview of technology, language skills and knowledge, and English for specific purposes (ESP), providing ample real-life examples of the roles that technology plays in language learning along with empirical evidence. Part 3 addresses feedback, materials, and teachers and discusses new aspects that have arisen due to incorporating technology in teaching, such as assessment strategies and e-learning material evaluation. In all three parts, there are several case studies presented so readers can visualize how technology can be effectively used to support the language development process.

Part 1 is divided into two chapters, and Li focuses these chapters on providing a comprehensive overview of seminal work in the field. A particular benefit of Part 1 is that it provides a global overview of technology in education and learning theories that support the integration of technologies in language learning (e.g., behaviorist, cognitivist, constructivist, and online collaborative learning theories). Part 1 further discusses how theory is enacted in practice. Li outlines how computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has

evolved, beginning with structural CALL and moving into communicative CALL, integrative CALL, and today's collaborative technology-enhanced language learning spectrum. In her discussion, Li stresses that these various forms of technology cannot be categorized in a precise timeline, as every time a new stage emerges, the previous stage continues. Moreover, in the summary of Chapter 1, Li writes that teachers should not restrict themselves to a singular form of CALL. As technology is a flexible tool that presents numerous affordances, teachers need to keep in mind the pedagogical goals. The second chapter focuses on authentic input and conscious noticing, as well as the role of technology, motivation, and second language acquisition. This first part of the book provides a well thought-out overview of how technology can enhance linguistic and affective aspects of learning for novice and expert readers.

Part 2 covers a wide range of technological tools and their roles in enhancing language learning. Chapter 3 considers the use of technology in facilitating teaching and developing interactional skills. Li uses a variety of technologies such as Skype and Voki to illustrate how such tools can enhance fluency, accuracy, and interactional competence. A strength of the technological examples throughout the book is that educators can adopt the activities Li puts forward for use with other technological tools, as there is no single, correct way to use them. In Chapter 4, Li focuses on reading and writing, as these two skills are where learners and teachers traditionally spend most of their time. What makes this chapter especially worthwhile is the incorporation of real-world cases, as well as the discussion of the appropriate uses of technology and materials. In the first half of the chapter, Li discusses writing approaches and the use of technology for writing. In this chapter, social networks, blogs, wikis, and corpora are introduced. Then, the discussion focuses on reading processes and approaches and the use of technology for assisted reading. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of online literacy and how it is an essential component for language acquisition. Li proposes a set of sub-skills that today's students need, including the ability to synthesize information and access appropriate sources. Li also reminds readers that for technology to be successful, teachers must effectively implement the technological tools in their classrooms (see Cabanatan, 2003; Li, 2014).

Chapter 5 emphasizes linguistic knowledge, specifically lexis and grammar. This is perhaps the most widely researched area within CALL, and Li concludes the chapter with a discussion of possible future directions and challenges that are thought-provoking. In addition, Li gives the reader ideas of how to use online graphical dictionaries such as viswords and ninjawords as educational tools. The final chapter in Part 2, Chapter 6, discusses how technologies can support teaching ESP and includes five types of technological tools (i.e., corpora, web-based materials, computed-mediated communication programs, wikis, and 3D virtual worlds). Moreover, Li also proposes five principles for integrating technology in ESP classes. In previous studies (e.g., Warschauer, 2004), scholars have established that teachers use computers in an optimal way when students are encouraged to perform the greatest number of real tasks. Li follows this up by stating that as ESP is becoming an increasingly popular form of English in the global world, teachers need to take a flexible approach in their teaching. Part 2 allows the reader to explore many of the ideas presented in the chapter through the multiple tasks and tools introduced.

Part 3 contains an excellent discussion on feedback, materials, and teacher attitudes. Chapter 7 takes both theoretical and practical perspectives of feedback into account. Li discusses issues and problems that may arise when using technologies to give feedback and assess students. She introduces how Microsoft Word, The Markin Programme, and screen casting tools can be used to give feedback and provides step-by-step instruction on how to use them. Toward the end of this section, Li highlights that teachers should consider the needs and abilities of our students before deciding to provide feedback via technology. Perhaps, a bridge between technology-assisted and face-to-face communication is optimal as technology-assisted and face-to-face feedback complement each other (Liu & Sadler, 2003). In the second half of the chapter, Li emphasizes assessments and how to integrate authoring tools (e.g., Hot Potatoes and Quandary) and online exam software (e.g., Quizworks). She concludes the chapter with a brief discussion on alternative forms of assessment, namely e-portfolios, and how they might bridge the gap between formal instruction and informal learning. As discussed and highlighted throughout, technology is a flexible tool and teachers have numerous options for how to utilize it in their own contexts.

Chapter 8 is a thorough and relevant discussion on how e-learning material can be evaluated, and Li introduces several frameworks to readers (e.g., checklists, methodological frameworks, and SLA-based approaches). She also discusses how to contextualize and adapt tasks and materials using numerous methods, such as the technology-based and activity-based approaches. She asks readers to keep in mind the pedagogical aspect of learning and not use technology just for the sake of using it. From a practical point of view, this chapter is very valuable, as readers can directly consider and evaluate materials for their own classrooms. Chapter 9 is devoted to a comprehensive review of language teachers' attitudes toward using technology. Li reviews the literature and discusses the factors that contribute to teachers' integration of technology in their classrooms. She presents the technology acceptance model and the technology integration framework as possible tools. There is also an extensive discussion on the role of teachers in technology-enhanced language teaching, and Li introduces the eight different roles by Goodyear (2001), as well as the four different roles of a teacher by Berge (1995) and Liu, Bonk, Magjuka, Lee, and Su (2005). The discussion includes a critical self-reflection task, where Li asks readers to analyze characteristics of good language teachers, especially in a technology-enhanced pedagogical framework.

Although this is a valuable resource to the field, one area Li could improve would be to include more examples of the latest technologies. I would have liked to see more discussion and evidence of virtual reality, augmented reality, and app smashing in teaching English, as these are becoming increasingly widespread in language learning. Another missed opportunity is the lack of a useful apps and websites section with links to the digital and online resources mentioned in the book. As the research on new technologies and language learning grows, future work can focus on integrating additional learning tools into the teaching process. There is also a need to expand the quantity of viable activities to provide even more options for utilizing technologies in language learning in a teacher's own context.

A strength of *New Technologies and Language Learning* is that each chapter contains several tasks and case studies for readers to reflect upon and to try out, closely examining how technology can be used. This helps readers to personalize the content. Moreover, each chapter contains a glossary of key terms, such as *zone of proximal development*, and ends with an annotated reader for follow-up. These additions make Li's book widely accessible for anyone interested in new technologies and language learning, as the complexity of the discussions is never overwhelming. In each chapter, Li repeats that technology can be a helpful tool in language learning if integrated properly.

Overall, *New Technologies and Language Learning* is a timely publication, and it synthesizes seminal work, theory, and practical application, creating a highly relevant and rewarding reading experience. Its pedagogical approach makes it especially useful as a textbook for teachers from the primary to adult sectors in their efforts to understand the importance of technology in language learning. The volume offers multiple levels of resources.

References

- Berge, Z. L. (1995). Facilitating computer conferencing: Recommendations from the field. *Educational Technology, 35*(1), 22–30.
- Cabanatan, P. (2003). *Integrating pedagogy and technology: The SEAMEO INNOTECH experience*. Paper presented at the Experts Meeting on Teachers/Facilitators Training in Technology–Pedagogy Integration, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Chappelle, C. A., & Sauro, S. (2017). *The handbook of technology and second language teaching and learning*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Chun, D., Kern, R., & Smith, B. (2016). Technology in language use, language teaching, and language learning. *The Modern Language Journal, 100*(S1), 64–80.
- Farr, F., & Murray, L. (2016). *The Routledge handbook of language learning and technology*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.

- Golonka, E. M. (2014). Technologies for foreign language learning: A review of technology types and their effectiveness. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 27(1), 70–105.
- Goodyear, P. (2001). *Effective networked learning in higher education: Notes and guidelines*. Lancaster, UK: Joint Information Systems Committee.
- Li, L. (2014). Understanding language teachers' practice with educational technology: A case from China. *System*, 46, 105–119.
- Liu, J., & Sadler, R. W. (2003). The effect and affect of peer review in electronic versus traditional modes on L2 writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2(3), 193–227.
- Liu, X., Bonk, C. J., Magjuka, R. J., Lee, S., & Su, B. (2005). Exploring four dimensions of online instructor roles: A program level case study. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 9(4), 29–48.
- Warschauer, M. (2004). Technological change and the future of CALL. In S. Fotos & C. Brown (Eds.), *New perspectives on CALL for second and foreign language classrooms* (pp. 15–25). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

About the Author

Lucas Kohnke is a Teaching Fellow at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests include technology-supported teaching and learning and professional development using information communication technology. Lucas has published in *TESOL Journal*, *RELC Journal*, and *Journal of Education for Teaching*.

E-mail: lucas.kohnke@polyu.edu.hk