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Book Review

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Book Review

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Text:

Stanley, G. (2013). *Language learning with technology: Ideas for integrating technology in the classroom*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.

Recent uses of technology for Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) have ranged from Computer-Mediated Communication, including, but not limited to e-mail, chat, conferencing, and mailing lists (Levy & Stockwell, 2013), to social networking sites, which have emerged as a means to provide experiential language learning opportunities (Arnold & Paulus, 2010). The book reviewed here, *Language Learning with Technology: Ideas for Integrating Technology in the Classroom*, establishes a detailed reference for those wishing to integrate such technologies into their language teaching.

Stanley has structured this volume in the form of a menu of web resources and detailed suggestions for their application in the adult ESOL classroom. The book is comprehensive in scope and adeptly aligns the content-specific language learning goals with practical applications. Importantly, Stanley provides sample CALL activities organized by their main goals, language learning level, time needed for completion, learning focus, preparation needed prior to completion, and technical requirements. This format provides the reader with clear and explicit guidelines to ease the implementation of technology in classroom teaching practices.

In the *Introduction*, Stanley indicates the book is intended for classroom teachers who desire to improve their ability to integrate technology into their classroom teaching practices. He also provides a brief overview of how the text's 11 chapters focus on effective language pedagogy by targeting specific learning content goals rather than any specific technology.

Chapters one and two, *Integrating technology* and *Building a learning community*, attune the reader to the necessity of integrating technology into the curriculum rather than treating it as a special or isolated tool. Chapter one includes several ideas for getting started with technology such as tools for: icebreakers, technology surveys, classroom management, website analysis, basic audio recording, and flipping the classroom. In the second chapter he highlights the importance of utilizing technology-based tools such as social networking sites, blogs, and wikis to aid in establishing a sense of community, which draws on the members' shared values and goals as they relate to language learning. Stanley contends that online communities enable language learners to connect with one another and native speakers outside of the classroom for an extended period of time.

In chapters three and four, *Vocabulary* and *Grammar*, the author offers technologically enhanced versions of many common exercises. Stanley provides resources that facilitate identifying and retaining vocabulary along with learning to deduce meaning (39). Suggested learning goals in chapter three include working with words in context, identifying and reviewing individual words, and task-oriented vocabulary use. Some of the activities streamline the process of creating what has long been used in language classrooms (puzzles, quizzes, scavenger hunts, word associations, and posters); others show new possibilities opened up by software such as

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concordancers, which are used to sort linguistic data in corpus linguistics. In chapter four, Stanley suggests an audio version of a fill-in-the-gap exercise, as well as various grammar-check activities that focus on general accuracy and review of specific grammar items. Additionally, Stanley suggests a few task-oriented activities in which students either create certain grammar structures using images or text found on the web, or analyze the grammar in a text found on the web.

Chapters five, six, and seven focus on the basic skills of *Listening, Reading, and Writing*. Of these skills, listening as a learning skill often receives the smallest instructor attention in a language classroom due to “a general belief that listening can be ‘picked up’ by passive exposure to a language” (81). Chapter five provides suggestions for integrating focused listening practice into a language course. The activities range from topic-oriented comprehension and evaluation exercises to listening to an online classroom presenter or recordings of literary texts, and listening to student-produced interviews in class. Chapter six is composed to “enhance the different types of more traditional reading that occur in the language classroom” by focusing on skills such as “skimming, scanning, reading for gist, activating schema and inferencing” (99). Most of the suggested activities have been taught in classrooms for many moons (reading for speed, readathon, comparing texts, identifying text-types, for example), but Stanley offers suggestions on how to use technology to make more relevant or tangible such a traditional exercise. In chapter seven, Stanley suggests focusing on the type of technology-driven text production most relevant for the learners at hand, which could include blogs, CVs, emails, wikis, and social networks (121-122). This chapter focuses on collaborative writing through the aforementioned venues, alongside process writing, and genres writing.

Using technology to enhance the practice of speaking and pronouncing a language has only started in the last few years with the sophistication of computer equipment and mobile phones that enable voice recording (147). Chapters eight and nine, *Speaking and Pronunciation*, complement each other while eliciting the same process: speech. The activities in chapter eight are primarily topic-focused: planning travel or acting as tour guide, narrating a film or pictures, or dealing with current events in some format. Chapter nine removes that context from its activities and focuses on the acquisition and analysis of phonetics, intonation and pronunciation of individual words.

In chapter ten, *Project work*, Stanley describes the potential for technology to assist in providing more experiential learning-based activities, including task-based learning, which requires learners to complete meaningful tasks using the target language (189). In particular, the activities outlined in this chapter focus on collaborative writing as a means for learners to practice language skills via projects including the creation of online magazines, e-books, and recipes. Additionally, the chapter describes activities for podcasts, short film-based projects, and the use of WebQuests.

Chapter eleven, *Assessment and evaluation*, offers a variety of activities, which can be used for formative or summative assessment purposes. The chapter also highlights the potential for electronic portfolios to capture the essence of learners’ language development over time. Interestingly, Stanley also refers to the role of gamification in assessment via technology as a means to making language assessment more motivating and enjoyable for learners.

Although the text is comprehensive with regard to linguistic skills, a noteworthy omission is the role of technology in addressing culture in language learning. One of the groundbreaking features technology can offer a language classroom is direct access to the target culture through a myriad of websites, software, and social networking opportunities. Although

the chapter on project work delineates suitable formats for work on cultural topics, the volume could offer more attention to culture throughout each chapter, or at least as a standalone chapter. In addition, given that the volume is a practice-oriented handbook, designed for direct application in the classroom, the readability of the text could be improved by listing the suggested websites and software within the described activities rather than in the appendix. Including the resources directly in each subsection would make the volume easier to navigate in its implementation.

In summary, Stanley has put together a useful volume related to integrating technology in the classroom. It includes a variety of potential activities and references the main goals and learning focus of the activities. The text is clearly written and easy to follow. It will be an appropriate resource for language educators who are at least intermediate users of technology.

References

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About the Authors

Joe Terantino (Ph.D., University of South Florida) is Director of the Foreign Language Resource Center and Assistant Professor of Spanish and Foreign Language Education at Kennesaw State University. He is a passionate user and researcher of instructional technology and social media who enjoys the challenge of tinkering with new technologies. In particular, he is interested in computer-assisted language learning, foreign language education, and the integration of technology in teaching.

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