

## Chapter 37

# Divergent Teacher Viewpoints of Technology Integration in the Language Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the beliefs and practices of three language teachers in Thailand vis-à-vis their integration of technology in the classroom as well as their views regarding social networking site participation as a facilitative tool for instruction. The study brings together research on the identity development work of teachers and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Through the analysis of extensive teacher interview data and classroom observations, the study demonstrates how these teachers self-identify as users of technology, and how this sense of self interacts with and shapes various aspects of their teaching practice. The three teachers in this study represent a range of divergent viewpoints related to technology use and integration in the classroom, and the analysis of these viewpoints helps to illustrate the specific factors underlying how and why they choose to make pedagogic use of technology.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the ever increasing potential for integration of technology into the language classroom, teachers are confronted with a range of diverse issues for consideration. These include articulating their own personal and professional stances with respect to educational technology, modifying and adapting their pedagogy to incorporate various technologies, and deciding how best to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of today's students. The paths that teachers take as they work through these issues are mediated through the sociocultural contexts that they live and work in, as well as their own personal experiences with technology. One of the primary technological tools being considered by educators today is the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) for language learning and instruction. Many teachers and researchers are wondering whether or not there is a viable way to harness the obvious interest in sites like Twitter and

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Facebook (FB), and to transform this interest into meaningful ways to improve language skills (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; boyd, 2006; Halvorsen, 2014; Mills, 2011; Reinhardt & Zander, 2011).

One way to begin to analyze some of these challenges is to look in detail at the diverse approaches that teachers are taking today. The present study is an attempt to do precisely this. Through a detailed qualitative analysis of the lives and teaching practices of three high school teachers in Thailand, the study begins to shed some light on the complex interplay between how teachers self identify as users of technology, and how they build and shape classroom practices vis-à-vis educational technology.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

This study is informed primarily through two key theoretical orientations. The first of these is identity construction in the classroom and in particular our current understanding of language teacher self-identification as it relates to and informs teaching practice. Secondly, this study draws on theoretical work from Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as it analyzes SNS use by teachers both in their personal and professional lives. The interplay between these two theoretical perspectives creates the primary analytic framework for the presentation of findings in this study.

### **Language Teacher Self-Identification and Language Teaching Practice**

Identity as a construct is not a new area of social inquiry, though within the field of language education, studies have only begun to emerge within approximately the last 20-30 years. Norton (1997) is among the earliest and best known studies of language learner identity, looking at the various roles that are taken up by immigrant women in Canada. In terms of language teacher identity, much work has targeted the distinction between native and non-native speaking teachers, and their respective senses of themselves as valued members of the teaching community. Martel and Wang (2014) reviewed research on language teacher identity and identified several primary findings from the research. First, they point out that identities are shaped through social context and interaction with others. Second, research has highlighted the mutually constitutive relationship between teacher identity and classroom practice. Also, they state that “teachers’ views of themselves as cultural beings bear upon their cultural teaching practices” (p. 293), suggesting that how teachers choose to position themselves within various sociocultural contexts impacts their teaching practice.

Morgan (2004), using primarily a poststructuralist framework, points out that identity itself, much like teaching practice, has inherent fluidity. A teacher’s sense of self shifts through time, as they come into contact with differing social and cultural influences and develop new approaches and pedagogic skill sets. Identity and teaching practice both constitute and are constituted by one another. As one begins to change, so too will the other. Morgan used the phrase “identity as pedagogy” to highlight this fluidity, and also to better express the notion that identities are not fixed constructs but are in fact performative in nature, both in the classroom and in daily interactions with others.

One of the primary gaps in the research into teacher identity is specific to technology and its use by teachers in personal and professional contexts. In one study, Trent and Shroff (2013) looked at preservice teachers in Hong Kong and discussed how teacher identities were shaped partly through their participation in the development of their personal e-Teacher portfolios. The portfolio development process interacted with their teaching practicum experience to inform their sense of themselves as current and future

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