

Chapter 40

The Role of Language Teacher Beliefs in an Increasingly Digitalized Communicative World

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the role of the language teacher and their beliefs in realizing the potential that rapidly evolving technology-mediated tools offer second/additional language learning (L2) in an increasingly digitalized world. The promise and pressures of technology integration are first discussed highlighting the need for new approaches to pedagogy in technology-mediated L2 teaching. Factors contributing to teacher resistance are then reviewed including the unique qualities of educational resistance to technology. Research identifying the nature of teacher beliefs from a range of studies is examined along with a conceptual framework illustrating the interconnected factors shaping L2 teacher beliefs and behaviour towards educational technology. Recommendations for effective approaches to technology-directed language teacher education and areas of needed research conclude the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades the way we use language has dramatically changed. Texting, Twitter, social networks, online gaming, augmented/virtual reality and an emerging array of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have transformed traditional ways of communicating with each other. Twenty years ago, few of us sent texts. Ten years ago we may have sent 65 texts a month to close friends. Now the average mobile phone user sends a minimum of 65 texts every two days (Van Camp, 2017). Our repertoire of communication media and social practices has dramatically expanded. We can tweet a 140-character message to an extended global audience. We can co-write and co-edit a document using Google docs in multi-user virtual environments. We can be members of varied online communities, ex-

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pressing plurilingual identities using a negotiated lingua franca. Language, social practices and technologies are converging in dynamic and innovative ways. *We're in the middle of the largest communication shift in human history* (Van Camp, 2017, para 5) and this shift is dramatically changing how we need to teach languages (Jones, 2016; Skyes, Oskoz & Thorne, 2016; Tour, 2015).

How the language teaching profession meets this increasingly digitalized communicative landscape depends to a great degree on teachers. It has been said that a teacher's mindset and beliefs towards any educational innovation are the most critical factors in determining the success of that innovation (Basturkmen, 2012; Cuban, 2001; Hong, 2010). Given the widening and rapidly emerging scope of technologies that can be used in language education, teachers and their beliefs have become key decision makers in the successful integration of language teaching technologies. This chapter will revisit and update an article examining the intersection of teacher beliefs and technology-mediated language teaching and learning (Lawrence, 2014a). The chapter will discuss the promise and pressures of technology integration in second/additional language (L2) teaching and learning, highlighting the need for a new approach to pedagogy. Factors prompting resistance to technology-mediated approaches will be outlined along with research examining the multiple factors influencing teacher beliefs and behaviours towards technology-mediated language learning (TMLL)¹. This will be followed by a conceptual framework illustrating the interconnected factors shaping L2 teacher beliefs and actions using technology-mediated approaches. Recommendations for teacher education and areas of needed research will conclude the chapter.

The Promise and Pressures of Digital Language Use

ICTs are transforming the way we use language in our daily lives, introducing dramatically different literacy practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Computers, the Internet and the emergence of social computing have created environments in which we increasingly interact, negotiate identities and engage in communicative practices that disrupt the boundaries of time and space (Jones, 2016). The physical and virtual worlds are increasingly becoming fused, blurring boundaries. Web 2.0 tools like multi-user wikis, Google docs and social networks are inherently interactive and intensely collaborative, destabilizing the traditional relationships between communicators and their interlocutors, between teachers and students (Luo, 2013). Digital literacy practices have fueled hybridized language use, facilitating plurilingualism, a mix of linguistic/cultural codes and voices deployed in strategic and innovative ways (Jones, 2016; Skyes, Oskoz & Thorne, 2016; Piccardo, 2013). Interactions in these highly situated and emergent virtual environments require autonomy, digital literacies and the need for strategic and intercultural competence.

While these digital disruptions have been seen as somewhat unsettling, transforming language use and 'language teaching', they also offer language learning, and language teaching, great promise. Emerging literacy practices involve new forms of social interaction, connection, language use and new understandings of agency and community (Gee & Hayes, 2011; White, 2016). ICTs with multimedia target language input and output offer L2 teachers a wealth of tools to build motivating learning environments that can facilitate a range of student-centered competencies (communicative, plurilingual, intercultural) and transferable digital literacies (Stockwell, 2012; Knobel & Kalman, 2016; Luo, 2013). Such learning has the potential to engage learners in dynamic target language communities, in identity negotiation, fueling an investment in language and intercultural learning beyond the classroom (Lawrence, 2013). Flipped classrooms have been found to engage EFL learners in more learning time, resulting in greater improvements in writing proficiency (Leis, Cooke & Tohei, 2015).

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