

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on Language Learning, Online Writing, Essay Writing, Online Peer Interactions, and Teaching Phonics to Children

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This issue of *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching* (IJCALLT) assembles five papers emphasizing broadly different perspectives in CALL: learner autonomy for essay writing, development of register awareness through online writing, social networking sites for language learning, affective enhancement through online peer interaction, and teaching of phonics to children.

Wang, Spencer, and Wang have conducted a study based on their double-channel model for online learning in order to develop learner autonomy in an EFL context, China. Emphasizing not only independent learning, their new model also incorporated interdependent learning which involved communicating in English with others, which altogether led to their development of an autonomous learning platform. Findings supported the effectiveness of the autonomous platform for English learn-

ing as measured by essay writing, compared with two control groups. The authors commented on the areas to be improved in some modules of this platform, but concluded the platform grounded in the model promises to promote autonomous English learning.

Ching-Feng Chang compares EFL college students' development of register awareness through writing online forum and traditional essays. To do this, she employs discourse analysis and examines 19 Taiwanese students' writing in weekly online forum and traditional essays. The findings of her study indicated that both writing contexts facilitate students' consciousness of register. In addition, participants tended to use more complex sentence structures in essay writing than in online forum.

Billy Brick addresses the issue of the role of social networking sites for language learning in UK higher education. To do this, he conducts survey and reports the outcomes of

two small research projects and the perspectives of both practitioners and students toward the social networking site (<http://www.busuu.com>). Mixed findings were observed in the study. Brick concludes the study that Busuu and other language learning social networking sites provide language learners with the opportunity to practice their speaking skills with native speakers of their target language and to receive almost immediate feedback on their entries which was previously impossible.

Wu, Marek, and Yen have applied online peer interaction and teacher scaffolding in order to enhance learners' motivation, confidence, and satisfaction. Through "live" interaction, videoconferencing, with a native speaker in USA, the thirty-seven Taiwanese students used critical thinking to develop presentations back to the American on local culture. A single-group interrupted time-series design was used to investigate how students perceived changes in their learning motivation, satisfaction, and confidence, as well as changes in their actual performance, measured by grades. They found that successes in both student performance and affective factors have supported instructional design in this project.

Quite different from the other four papers (and perhaps most of the existing CALL studies), Yu-Lin Cheng in the fifth article of this issue uniquely addresses how an interac-

tive synthetic phonics software, *Easy Phonics* can be profitably applied to enhance reading performance of unknown English words. Specifically designed for Chinese L1 learners, *Easy Phonics* was implemented in classes and used by twenty-seven primary school students (as compared with the control group, n=28). Arguably, the findings support such pedagogical use of *Easy Phonics* in helping teachers in maintaining teaching standards and boosting learning outcomes.

With different online media, the five studies have demonstrated CALL effectiveness through various learner data in diversified contexts. Together, it is hoped that the evidence helps our readers and professionals in other fields of applied linguistics to understand more how technologies can enhance language learning. Last, we would acknowledge the essential efforts of individuals who have assisted us to review the manuscripts and made the issue appear to share with the CALL profession: Mei Mei Chang, Howard Hao-Jan Chen, Mei Hua Chen, Shih Ting Huang, Gi Zen Liu, Hui-Ching Yeh, Shiou Wen Yeh, Joy Egbert and other anonymous reviewers.

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