

SPECIAL ISSUE OF GLOCALL 2023 CONFERENCE PAPERS

Recent Technological Developments in Education Across Asia

Editorial Team:

Siew Ming Thang, HELP University, Malaysia
Danyang Zhang, Shenzhen University, China
Priyadarshini Muthukrishnan, INTI International University, Malaysia
Warid Mihat, University Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

This special issue features a selection of articles from the GLoCALL & ChinaCALL 2023 conference, which was hosted by PacCALL and ChinaCALL at the School of Foreign Languages of Inner Mongolia Normal University in Hohhot, China, from August 10th to 12th, 2023. The conference is part of the annual GLoCALL series, which has been held since 2007 to share insights, research, and practices on leveraging technology to improve language learning and to explore how technology can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of language learners.

This year's special issue presents a collection of eleven articles that delve into three main areas. The first area focuses on ongoing debates that have arisen since the emergence of online learning. It includes comparisons of the effectiveness of online versus face-to-face instruction, evaluations of the benefits of blended learning -- a combination of both methods -- and an analysis of the comparative advantages of synchronous versus asynchronous learning. Four articles fall under this area. The second area, which includes articles five through eight, examines the use of various technologies to enhance language learning. The final area addresses in articles nine to eleven explores the effectiveness of apps in enhancing language learning.

The first article, titled "English Foreign Language Teachers' Lesson Preparation: A Comparison between Online and Face-to-face Teaching" by **Vo Thi Thu Thao, Nguyen Thi Xuan Lan, and Le Van Thinh** examines the differences in lesson preparation for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in online versus face-to-face settings. The study reveals that online teaching necessitates more extensive preparation due to the need for digital resources and technological proficiency, as well as the requirement to make materials engaging and interactive in a virtual environment. In contrast, face-to-face teaching allows for more spontaneous interactions and on-the-fly adjustments during lessons. The research highlights the importance of professional development to equip teachers with the skills needed for effective online instruction. Overall, the paper underscores the unique challenges and demands of online teaching compared to traditional classroom settings and advocates for targeted support and training for EFL teachers transitioning to or balancing both modes of instruction.

The second and third papers explore the use of the blended approach. In the second article, titled "Vietnamese EFL Lecturers' Blended Learning Practices and Concerns: A Call for Institutional Support and Professional Development," **Huyen-Tram Kieu, Kean Wah Lee, and Subarna Sivapalan** investigate the implementation of blended learning in higher education. This study employed an embedded case study approach involving seven EFL lecturers from Vietnamese universities. Through semi-structured interviews and

questionnaires, the study examined the lecturers' perspectives on blended learning methods and their associated concerns. The findings indicate that while the lecturers were early adopters of blended learning, they had a limited understanding of its concepts and were generally prepared to design and deliver online courses. However, they expressed significant personal and informational concerns, provided minimal support, and exercised limited oversight of online student learning, primarily viewing it as a supplement to in-person instruction. The study recommends creating a supportive educational environment, offering appropriate professional development, and implementing clear policies related to blended learning to standardise the approach, particularly for early adopters.

The third article titled “Blended Learning Approach in Learning English Communication Skills for Japanese College Students”, by **Siyuan Chen and Lee Kean Wah** explores how Japanese college students (JCS) develop their English Communication Skills (ECS) and the impact of an innovative blended learning approach on their progress. The study involved 57 JCS from a Japanese vocational school, with data collected through structured interviews and questionnaires using a case study framework. The study aims to understand how JCS perceive their experience with blended learning as well as the benefits, opportunities and challenges it presents. The findings reveal that JCSs have positive experiences with blended learning demonstrated by high scores in terms of Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), and they expressed satisfaction with the user-friendly Learning Management System (LMS) employed in this approach.

The fourth article, "Factors Influencing Asynchronous and Synchronous Online Learning Experiences: A Comparative Study," authored by **Wee Ling Choo and Lee-Luan Ng**, investigates the factors that affect the online learning experiences of tertiary ESL learners in vocabulary courses, focusing on asynchronous and synchronous modalities through the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework. The study involved 19 participants and utilized thematic analysis of interviews to identify similarities and differences in cognitive, social, and teaching presence between the two groups. The Findings indicated that learning resources, activities, and peer learning influenced cognitive presence, while social presence was affected by participation and support for asynchronous learners and conscious effort for synchronous learners. Teaching presence was characterised by instructor feedback and availability for asynchronous learners, and planning for synchronous learners. The study suggests insights for enhancing online vocabulary teaching and learning.

Articles five through eight focus on the second area, which explores the use of various technologies to enhance language learning. The fifth article, “Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Portfolio in Enhancing Learning Experiences During Teaching Practice”, authored by **Lee Kean Wah, Wirawati Ngui, Chai Xun Yu, and Alberto Luis August**, investigates the use of digital portfolios (DPs) among pre-service teachers. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this study offers new insights into the perceived usefulness, ease of use, attitudes towards DPs, and the intention to use them. Notably, the research places particular emphasis on emotional responses, peer collaboration, and the impact on teaching self-efficacy, especially among Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) pre-service teachers. The findings indicate that while DPs present significant opportunities for enhancing learning and teaching practices, they require sufficient support and practice time for effective implementation. The study emphasizes the need for well-defined objectives and institutional support to fully realize the benefits of DPs in educational settings.

The sixth article, “Teacher Trainee's Acceptance of Interactive eBooks for Teaching: An Analysis Using the Modified Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)” by **Priyadarshini Muthukrishnan, Aravind, B.R, Elis Johannes Hendry Salim, Sharon Vijaya Balakrishnan, Balvinder Kaur, and Prakasha G. S** examine the adoption of interactive eBooks by teacher trainees. The study focuses on several factors, including attitudes, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, enjoyment, perceived self-efficacy, and behavioral intention to use interactive eBooks in teaching. Utilizing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study examines the relationships among these variables. Data were collected from 89 teacher trainees at private and public institutions in Malaysia through an online questionnaire. Data was collected from 89 teacher trainees in private and public institutions in Malaysia, using an online questionnaire. The key findings reveal that attitude significantly influences both the behavioral intention to use interactive eBooks and perceived self-efficacy in teaching with them. Additionally, the study confirms a direct effect of ease of use on enjoyment and shows that perceived usefulness influences the perception of ease of use. This research makes a valuable contribution by enhancing teacher trainees' attitudes toward creating and using digital resources for instructional purposes.

The seventh article, “Exploring Metaverse-Blended Learning in an English Presentation Class: Student Perceptions” by **Myung-Jeong Ha**, delves into the potential of the Metaverse platform Gather Town in enhancing English presentation skills among college students. The study was conducted over a 15-week period using a blended learning model that combined traditional classroom teaching with activities in the Metaverse. The research involved 24 EFL students and employed mixed methods, including questionnaires and group interviews, to gather data. The research revealed high levels of student satisfaction and engagement with the Metaverse-enhanced course. Students appreciated the platform's two-dimensional communication and avatar-mediated interaction. The study also identified speaking anxiety, interest in the Metaverse, and English language proficiency as significant predictors of presentation anxiety in a Metaverse environment. The findings suggest that Metaverse platforms can offer innovative and engaging learning experiences that may help alleviate presentation anxiety and enhance language learning.

Article eight by **Van Huynh Ha Le, Denchai Prabjandee, and Punwalai Kewara**, titled “Virtual Reality: A Virtual World to Realize English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Enhance Students' Self-Efficacy”, integrates VR into language learning. The authors conducted an empirical study on 74 undergraduate students to measure the effects on students' confidence and listening skills. Two questionnaires were used to compare self-efficacy levels between students using VR and those who did not. The findings reveal that VR significantly enhances both English self-efficacy and listening self-efficacy, with students expressing excitement about communicating with diverse interlocutors, which in turn boosts their self-efficacy. This study not only highlights the benefits of VR in improving listening efficacy but also addresses potential obstacles faced by teachers and learners. The authors emphasise the pedagogical implications of implementing ELF through VR suggesting that VR can offer valuable exposure to various English dialects and improve overall language learning outcomes. This research sets the stage for future studies to investigate innovative VR applications in language education.

The final area in this special issue examines the effectiveness of apps in enhancing language learning. Article ninth titled "Use of English-Learning Mobile Apps for Business Students in Vietnam" by **Thang Ho Minh**, investigates students' perceptions of English-learning mobile apps. The study offers recommendations for app developers on how to enhance

or personalise their products for business students and professionals. It evaluates the mobile apps used by business students at a Vietnamese university based on four criteria: material, methodology, technology, and user experience. Employing a case study approach with mixed methods, the research collected data through descriptive analysis and focus group interviews to understand students' motivations for using these apps. The findings reveal that while several apps benefit undergraduate students, improvements in materials and methods are crucial for increasing user satisfaction. Qualitative insights indicate that motivation, engagement, flexibility, and user experience play significant roles in students' use of mobile English learning apps.

The tenth article “Using Kahoot! to Teach English Vocabulary: Benefits, Drawbacks, and Actual Impacts from Students’ Perspective” by **My. T. Truong Ha and N. Dinh** investigate the integration of the popular Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tool, Kahoot! in English language teaching, with a focus on vocabulary lessons. Despite its global popularity, there is limited empirical evidence from students' perspectives in developing countries. The study used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to find the perspectives of the students on the use of Kahoot! in enhancing their motivation, collaboration, participation, and learning outcomes. Data were collected from 49 Vietnamese university students through questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The findings reveal that while Kahoot! is generally perceived as beneficial for learning, it has drawbacks, such as its reliance on technology and its limited capacity to promote higher-order thinking. The study underscores the importance of balancing ease of use with opportunities to develop technological proficiency in ICT-enhanced classrooms. These insights contribute to the existing literature on ICT in education and suggest the need for further research in various contexts to validate Kahoot!’s effects on learning outcomes.

The final article in this area, titled “Kahoot! in Higher Education: A Comparative Study of Lecturers' and Students' Perceptions on a Game-Based Learning Platform by **Warid Mihat, Wong Wei Lun, Lee Huan Yik, and Lee Sze Seau**, explores the perceptions of both lecturers and students regarding the use of Kahoot! in higher education. Conducted at a Malaysian university, the research involved 252 students and 130 lecturers, employing a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design. The findings highlight both groups acknowledge Kahoot!'s positive impact on engagement and motivation in teaching and learning. However, the study also uncovers subtle differences in their views, particularly concerning teaching strategy preferences, the platform's reliability for summative assessments, and limitations stemming from the use of Kahoot!'s free version. The authors emphasize the importance of addressing these differences to fully leverage the benefits of game-based learning platforms like Kahoot! in higher education and ensure their effective utilization.

These papers, gathered from diverse contexts, clearly demonstrate that advancements in the use of technology are ongoing and continue to incorporate the latest developments in ICT. Lastly, the editors would like to take this opportunity to express their gratitude to the reviewers (as listed below in alphabetical order) for their invaluable comments, advice, and guidance.

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