

Reviews

New Perspectives on Using Digital Technology in Inclusive Language Education

Beltrán, E. V., Abbott, C., & Jones, J. (Eds). (2013). *Inclusive Language Education and Digital Technology*. Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 182 p.
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The volume edited by Elina Elina Vilar Beltrán, Chris Abbott and Jane Jones is a recent publication bringing together experts from around Europe who deal with the issue of using digital technology in inclusive language education. The work is aimed at all interested in the field of teaching modern foreign languages (MFL), special educational needs (SEN) and digital technology.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one, consisting of three chapters, outlines key issues of inclusive education, languages and digital technologies. The second one, comprising six consecutive chapters, presents a set of case studies of practices in a range of cultural contexts.

Jane Jones, Senior Lecturer in MFL Teacher Education at King' College London, opens the first part of the book with the chapter entitled *Modern Foreign Languages as an Inclusive Learning Opportunity: Changing Policies, Practices and Identities in the Language Classroom*. She reviews the changing attitudes and classroom practices regarding children with special educational needs, also referred to as children with additional support needs (ASN).

Chris Abbott, Reader in e-Inclusion at King's College London, is the author of the second chapter being his *Personal View* on and a historical outline of *Technology Uses and Language* even before the arrival of classroom computers. He particularly focuses on the response of teachers and schools to various technological developments.

The last chapter of the first part by David Wilson, *Meeting Special Educational Needs in Technology-Enhanced Language Teaching: Learning from the Past, Working for the Future*, is devoted to challenges met by teachers who differentiate their modern foreign language lessons to engage learners with special educational needs through the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Wilson's paper highlights key points to be considered when introducing ICT-assisted MFL teaching. The researcher is now retired but still

works as a volunteer in the Equal Opportunities Department at Harton Technology College in South Shields in the North East of England.

Chapter 4, the first chapter of the second part of the book, *The 21st Century Languages Classroom – The Teacher Perspective* is co-written by Elina Vilar Beltrán, a language instructor at Queen Mary University of London, and Auxiliadora Sales Ciges, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education at Universitat Jaume I in Spain. The academics share their English and Spanish school experiences, exploring language teachers' perceptions of differentiation and modification in response to heterogeneity.

Chapter 5, by Ewa Domagała-Zyśk, a Researcher and Lecturer at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, focuses on *Using Technology to Teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*. The scholar explores the way in which technology, being also an opportunity for alternative communication, can support the process of learning EFL by students whose sense of hearing has been impaired.

Lynne Meiring, working at University of Wales and Swansea Metropolitan University, and Nigel Norman, formerly Senior Lecturer in Education (MFL) at Swansea Metropolitan University School of Education, are the authors of Chapter 6. They present *Information and Communication Technology as An Instrument for Developing Inclusive Practice in the Training of Modern Languages Teachers*. The most valuable part of this section is called *Distinctive Characteristics of ICT for all Learners* in which practical classroom examples illustrating how some student teachers have applied ICT in the classroom are presented. The examples include different types of students' needs, such as speech and learning difficulties, visual impairment, or most able and talented/gifted.

The issue of *Foreign Language for Learners with Dyslexia – Inclusive Practices and Technology* is addressed in Chapter 7 by Margaret Crombie, an Educational Consultant with specialism in Literacy Difficulties and Dyslexia and an Associate Lecturer with the Open University. Crombie highlights the areas in which learners with dyslexia find difficult and how these problems can be dealt with using appropriate technologies in order to reach a satisfactory level of communicative abilities in a foreign language.

Creative Engagement and Inclusion in the Modern Foreign Language Classroom by John Connor constitutes Chapter 8. The former head of a language faculty and local authority adviser examines the extent to which interactive Web 2.0. resources, such as websites, blogs and wikis, can be motivating for children with learning difficulties.

The final chapter by Andreas Jeitler, a specialist in the field of universal accessibility at Klagenfurt University's Library, and Mark Wassermann, Head of

the Department for the Support of Students with Disability and Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities at the University of Klagenfurt, investigates the *Conflicts between Real-Time Resources and the Storage of Digitized Materials: Issues of Copyright*. The authors consider different aspects of the process of creating accessible digital documents, taking legal solutions into consideration. They also discuss why printed media represent a barrier for the visually impaired and try to answer the question whether digital media could be a solution for such people.

To sum up, the book offers a variety of articles written by European contributors from different research establishments. Owing to this fact, Beltrán, Abbott and Jones balance the enthusiasm for technology-enhanced foreign language learning with the recognition of the inevitably existing constraints. Undoubtedly, information and communication technologies are the teaching and learning tools of this age, and thus should not be undervalued. Today's children, whether typically developing or manifesting special educational needs, are digital natives. They use computers and other inventions on a daily basis. It seems natural to them. Having understood this phenomenon, the book under discussion offers new perspectives on using digital technology in inclusive language education.

Since this volume, apart from relating to theoretical and policy framework issues, suggests practical ideas, I believe it can be a good companion to language teachers, especially inclusive ones, who would like to use digital technologies in their work with SEN children. As suggested on the back cover, *Inclusive Language Education and Digital Technology* also aims to promote discussion and collaboration within international community so as to ensure a more effective MFL learning. Likewise the editors, I hope that this publication can inspire language experts, special educational needs professionals and technology specialists to further investigate the issue of MFL teaching in inclusive classrooms.

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