

## Editorial

This second issue of Volume 17 contains five articles contributed by authors from different parts of Eurasia, namely Southeast and East Asia (Thailand, China and Japan), West Asia (Saudi Arabia) and Central Europe (Austria and Poland). Nearly all the articles are related to learning contexts involving English as a foreign language (EFL), while one of the articles stood out by its interest in learners of Japanese as a foreign language.

All five articles are thematically linked by the deep interest in the types of factors that could have an impact on the success of any foreign language learning endeavour. Such factors include (i) learners' prior gaming experiences which contributed to providing meaningful input in a target language, (ii) gamification, i.e. the introduction of game design elements in a foreign language curriculum to promote learner motivation, (iii) the use of Language Learning Strategy Instruction (LLSI) for tips on the correct use of the target language, (iv) Social Networking Sites that allow learners to obtain feedback from native speakers about their writing proficiency, as well as (v) web-based study tools such as "Quizlet", which fosters learner autonomy in foreign language classes. The insights from the fourth and fifth articles are particularly useful to researchers and practitioners interested in online teaching and learning the era of the global Covid-19 pandemic, during which language teachers have had to scramble to adopt the new normal of emergency remote teaching.

In particular, the first article by Assim Alrajhi from Qassim University investigated the extent to which independent gaming experiences of EFL learners can help them to acquire linguistic competences, whether certain skills stand to gain more than others, and if there were factors that affect such incidental language learning. He found that gaming was useful for improving the recognition of written words or phrases, as well as oral skills involving listening, pronunciation and comprehension of utterances encountered in the games. This is reminiscent of Krashen's (1977) Input Hypothesis, according to which the progress of language learning can occur if and only if the language input of the next higher level that learners are exposed to is comprehensible, meaningful and relevant to them. On the other hand, such incidental language learning through video games can be facilitated or hindered by factors such as the difficulty level of the games, and the types of video games played (e.g. story-based adventures vs sports-based games). The interesting findings of this article provide useful implications for language teachers wishing to utilise commercial games for language learning, especially with regard to knowing whether—or how—they may tap on the potential of gaming experiences to optimise their learners' learning outcomes.

The second article co-authored by Harald Kraus, Yuan Zhu and Guodong Deng is on a related topic involving game-like elements, i.e. the use of gamification to increase student interest and engagement. While the previous article studied how the playing of games unrelated to a language course could contribute to language learning, this paper is concerned with gamification as a central component of a language course—deliberately introduced to enhance the learning experience—as well as the logistical and conceptual issues involved in such an undertaking. Analysing responses from students and teachers participating in a gamification project for a large scale EFL course, the co-authors based in Thailand at Thammasat University and in China at Yunnan Normal University reflected on the need to adapt the game design elements introduced in the course according to the levels of learner proficiency targeted and the nature of language skills addressed. Other contributing factors to the success of EFL learning through gamification include students' familiarity with learner-centred approaches, teachers' clarity in their conceptualisation of the game elements introduced and whether instructions to learners were adequately understood.

In the third article by Agnieszka Kaldonek-Crnjaković, the attention is turned to Language Learning Strategy Instruction (LLSI) as a teaching approach to help learners become aware of the processes that facilitate the successful acquisition of language skills; in other words, teaching learners how to learn language successfully. Analysing lesson transcripts of an advanced level EFL class of adult learners, the author from University of Warsaw was able to investigate the frequency of events that indicated naturally-occurring LLSI, the variety of language skills that were concerned by those LLSI events, how the LLSI itself was carried out (in terms of characteristics like interaction type, degree of explicitness, presence of essential elements, and strategy category) and whether any effects of the LLSI could be observed.

The fourth article by Horomi Nishioka contributes to an understanding about how certain Social Networking Sites designed for language learning (SNSLL) can help learners to develop written competencies in a foreign language. Standing out from the rest of the volume as the only article considering learners of a language other than EFL, the author introduced a SNS known as "Lang-8" to his Japanese writing class made up of first-year students in a South Korean college. In this language exchange SNS, members are identified by their respective native languages, while any foreign language learner using the SNSLL could ask questions to native speakers about how the target language should be used in writing. Through semi-structured interviews with the participants, the author provided insights into the perceptions that learners had about the usefulness of this SNSLL, what particular aspects of the SNSLL were seen to be beneficial to their learning, and whether they encountered problems in their use of the SNSLL.

The fifth article from Central Europe would undoubtedly be of great interest to all language teachers wanting to promote autonomous learning through the use of web-based study tools. This final article by Hans Platzer looks at the role of Quizlet to help learners acquire vocabulary in an EFL class. The author from the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt in Austria explores a variety of research questions on the use of Quizlet, including to what general extent it is effective for vocabulary learning, whether some of the seven activities proposed by Quizlet are more effective than others, and on the difference in Quizlet usage between higher competence and lower competence learners, with a view to knowing how to guide the latter group of learners towards better learning outcomes.

On behalf of my colleagues on the Editorial Board, I would like to sincerely thank all the contributors and readers for your continued support, not forgetting our external reviewers and the members of our International Advisory Board for their generous efforts in helping to upkeep and maintain our journal's standards. It is our earnest hope that everyone will find relevance and value in all the articles published in this issue, and we look forward to receiving quality research articles for our future issues.

Daniel K.-G. Chan  
Editor-in-Chief

## References

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