

## Review of “English Learning in the Digital Age”

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<b>Author</b>	Shuang Zeng
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### Reviewed by Yulia Tria Hapsari and Winda Sari (Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia)

This book provides empirical evidence toward digital technology use in English learning in China universities. The eighth-chapter book presents both the use and non-use of technology, an individual’s attempt to regain self-control over their technology use, in learning English by focusing on the role of agency and context in the learning process.

Chapter 1, Towards ‘Learner Experience Research’, discusses general information toward learners’ experiences of the practitioner of technology. The author shares his personal experience as an English learner and CALL (Computer Associated Language Learning) practitioner in mainland China. It is common practice that the Chinese undergraduate learners engage in out-of-class technology use for language learning, which essentially refers to language learning activities by using technology that takes place beyond the classroom. Hence the learners from the undergraduate university do language learning outside the classroom by practicing some activities, such as completing classroom assignments, preparing presentations, and practicing certain language skills. The study adopted mix-sequential design based on sociocultural theory to investigate the technology use-phenomenon of English-learning to Chinese learners that have a rich technology environment.

Chapter 2, Towards an Investigation of Language Learners’ (Non)Use of Online Technology, explores the promises and hopes of WELL for out-of-class language learning. Since WELL provides the participatory experience for learners to interact with communities around the world anywhere and anytime, to share oral and written information in the target language, and to browse as many as possible sources of information from the target language. Many CALL practitioners doubt the actual use of it outside the classroom for language learning. They argue that Web 2.0 is not very useful for language learners since many previous studies have shown that there was a misuse of the internet by the learners outside the classroom, especially for social use. Thus, this chapter presents the investigation of non-use of technology by the language learners, in contrary to the understanding of ‘digital native’, the generation of people who grew up in the age of digital technology, that is keen on integrating Web 2.0 for learning and education purposes.

Drawing sociocultural perspective, Chapter 3, A Sociocultural Framework for the Study of WELL Use examines the technology used by the learners in e-learning. This perspective includes two aspects, contextual information, and implication of the online technology that is used in language learning. It analyses the learners' behaviors and choices in using WELL. Two levels of

of E-learning discussed in this study, namely micro-level, focuses on the activity using technology, and macro-level, focuses on the properties of social worlds deploying technology to create learners' decisions and practices. The consideration of adopting a sociocultural perspective is linked with the use of WELL as the digital technology to learn second language acquisition (SLA). The major aspects of SLA are input, interaction, and output, which result in an expanded perception of the learners when they engage in interactive use of digital technology. This changing Web 2.0 framework is essential for decision-making in language learning practice.

Chapter 4, Questioning WELL Use in the Chinese University Context: Research Questions and Methods, reveals the complexity of L2 learners' choices and behaviors towards WELL. This chapter shows the empirical study towards the use of technology for English learning purposes of Chinese learners in two universities located in Nanjing, and Chongqing. There are three main research questions that are answered in the next chapter. This study used two methods of data collection namely questionnaire, and interview. The questionnaire in this study became the background information for the semi-structured interviews that followed. Purposive sampling was used to select 49 learners from the active and passive users of WELL. The background information showed that both universities have different internet access facilities for first-tier learners. The university that is located in Nanjing tends to limit Internet access, while the university that is located in Chongqing provides unlimited internet access for learners. In addition, the university that is located in Chongqing expands the use of English learning through technology by developing a virtual learning environment (VLE) that requires the learners to use the English-learning platform of VLE after class for a minimum of 12 hours each term.

Chapter 5, The Trend of English Learning-Related Use of Technology: The Role of Technology, analyses the use of WELL by Chinese learners. Through the surveys and interviews about the effect of WELL, the learners explain that online technology for regular study-related tasks is often non-interactive, and sometimes it is not interesting, which is different from CALL. WELL is the technology that enables the learners to study listening skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Despite the diversity toward the use of WELL, Chinese learners use internet tools to browse and search the English material for specific purposes such as requiring tasks or sometimes translating the English language into Chinese. Many learners prefer using WELL to complete the assignment rather than using it for communicative and different L2 opportunities. However, this appropriation of WELL is designed for obtaining learning information and resources which has been a primary focus in the debate of digital natives.

In contrast with the previous chapters, Chapter 6, 'Breaking Away' with Digital Technology: The Role of Agency, shows some cases of 'good practice' about how the Chinese learners overcome the barriers of using digital technology in the learning process, which is divided into two main points. The first is breaking away from the EFL context. Some learners that were interviewed illustrated several ways to overcome the learning barriers of L2 through digital technology, such as creating an input-intensive context of the English language with the constant engagement of online resources, interacting with international non-peers, and maintaining contact with international associates. Second, Chinese learners try to break away from traditional learning patterns and environments. In this case, the learners try to prove that English learning at Chinese universities is not traditional by creating learning from communicating with online peers and non-peers out-of-class. There were several efforts they did in this case, namely publishing their works online and asking for online peer feedback, solving their questions by browsing the answers on the internet, contributing to the online community regarding English learning, looking for motivation from online learning, and finding a suitable method for learning English.

Chapter 7, Resistance to Moving to Web 2.0: The Role of Context, explores the last question of using WELL. To understand the use of technology in language learning, the author examined the learners' experiences and responses. The researcher gave questionnaires and interviews to participants of Nanjing learners. Based on the findings of the questionnaire, WELL has some shortcomings when used by learners in language learning such as slow loading, access limitation in terms of the number of web pages, and sometimes the computer crashes when visiting a particular site. In addition, the data from the interview revealed that rather than using WELL, the

the learners are likely to use English learning resources because they do not have much time to use WELL. As seen from these data, Chinese learners have difficulty accessing this technology because they do not have much interest in exploring it. Besides, internet access and its quality also influenced it. WELL can be used by the learners in English learning to expand social networks by interacting with international peers.

Chapter 8, Understanding Language Learners’ non-use of Digital Technology, summarizes the previous chapters and gives suggestions for future research. There are three types of questions raised in Chapter 4 that are used to direct and organize the empirical data of this study. Subsequently, Chapter 5 answers the first question raised in Chapter 4 regarding the trends of using online technology for English-related purposes. The result shows that most of the Chinese undergraduate learners used online technology for task-based purposes only, and they did not explore further the features provided therein. However, in contrast with the previous chapter, Chapter 6 shows the innovative use of technology by the participants that help them with their English learning such as publication and community-building. Chapter 7 answers the last question about why the innovative use of technology only appeared in a small number of cases. Non-technical aspects such as learners’ belief and motive toward English learning, their existing learning, material, and social resources appear to be the main reasons that affect learners’ choices of technology resistance. Furthermore, this chapter provides four suggestions for future research. First, longitudinal research is required to see how the learners’ use technology from time to time. Second, researchers should pay more attention to the differences of various groups of L2 in using technology that might differently engage with it. Third, there is a need to investigate learners’ behavior towards technology based on the device used and the place they accessed it. Lastly, it is necessary to explore a more realistic approach to find an appropriate technology that could be used in L2 teaching and learning widely.

Even though this book provides an interesting topic, the way the author presents the data from one chapter to another chapter may be structured more appropriately as there are some parts that are not explained sequentially that may cause confusion to readers. In addition, this book provides an empirical study that used sampling from two first-tier universities in China that have similar academic requirements for learning English hence the data did not show significant differentiation. Despite its limitations, from the perspective of digital language learners, this book is relevant since it gives new insights to the readers as it presents a broad outline of the use and non-use of technology in learning English. It could inspire the readers to implement the use of technology in their teaching and learning, especially for English learning. Furthermore, this book offers in detail empirical evidence about learners’ choices and behavior regarding the non-use of technology for learning English in China in easy-to-understand language. Readers interested in WELL might be encouraged to conduct further research related to the current study as suggested in the last chapter of the book.