

Editorial: Towards improved language teaching and learning

"Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings." - Okri (1995).

This famous quote by Ben Okri highlights the importance of acknowledging and facing the strengths and weaknesses of current language teaching methods and embracing new and effective strategies, we can ensure that learners have access to the best possible language education and create a brighter future for language learners and their communities. In this issue, we present six diverse yet interconnected topics that all shed light on the efforts made towards improved language teaching and learning.

Despite covering diverse topics such as e-tandem learning, interdisciplinary writing, gamification, assessment, social media, and curriculum renewal, all of the articles demonstrate the need for innovative approaches that cater to learners' diverse needs and learning styles, as well as the importance of involving teachers in the curriculum development process. Additionally, the articles underscore the significance of creating a positive learning environment and providing learners with authentic opportunities to practice and improve their language skills. Overall, these articles highlight the ongoing efforts towards improving foreign language teaching and learning, with the hope of fostering better communication and understanding across cultures.

In the first article, **Sho Kobayashi** investigated the impact of eTandem language learning on students' psychological changes, specifically on reducing Unwillingness To Speak English (UTSE) and Anxiety about Communicating with a Foreigner (ACF) and enhancing Having Things to Communicate (HTC). The study comprised two Japanese male undergraduate students and three Chinese students at Pennsylvania State University. The results indicated that eTandem language learning greatly reduced UTSE and ACF, and improved HTC. Repeated speaking practice via eTandem may help alleviate students' language anxiety and enhance their language skills. Overall, the study's focus on investigating the impact of eTandem language learning on students' psychological changes is important and relevant, especially given the increasing use of technology in language education. The results of the study indicate that eTandem language learning has the potential to alleviate language anxiety and enhance language skills. These findings have practical implications for language educators who seek to design effective language learning programs that incorporate technology.

In our second article, **Walaipun Puengpipattrakul** examines the impact of five learner-factor groups on writing performance using confirmatory factor analysis and multiple-group structural equation modeling. Data was collected from the scores of 499 Thai undergraduates' persuasive writing task and questionnaire responses. The results showed that the intellectual factor had the most significant impact on writing performance. Out-of-class activity was found to be the most impactful learning factor for the Science and Technology group. Female students were more affected by intellectual factors than male students, and participants viewed instrumental motivation as affecting their writing performance. Qualitative data from gender non-conforming participants' responses uncovered underlying factors, leading to suggestions for further research regarding writing instruction. The study provides insights into the factors affecting writing performance in Thai undergraduates and emphasizes the importance of inclusive research practices by highlighting the responses of gender non-conforming participants. The study's findings provide valuable insights into the impact of intellectual and learning factors on writing performance, which could be useful for educators seeking to improve their students' writing abilities.

The third article by Marco Octavio Cancino Avila and Gumor Ignacio Castillo Fonseca discusses the concept of gamification, which involves using gaming elements to enhance learning and engagement in non-gaming environments. The study aimed to evaluate the impact of a gamified approach to teaching vocabulary on the learning and retention of EFL learners. Results indicated that the gamified approach yielded immediate and delayed vocabulary gains that were as effective as traditional classroom methods. Moreover, learners perceived the gamified approach to be engaging and helpful for maintaining learning levels. Overall, the study suggests that a gamified approach can be an effective and engaging way to teach vocabulary to EFL learners.

Our fourth article by **Masoomeh Estaji** and **Amir Kardoust** explores the assessment practices of Iranian EFL teachers and emphasizes the need for teachers to be aware of their classroom-based assessment strategies. The study reveals that teachers mainly use assessment for student-centered purposes and employ student-administered strategies for assessing different skills. The paper highlights the importance of classroom-based assessment as the foundation for other types of assessments in a standards-based education system. The substantial amount of class time devoted to assessment underscores the significance of assessment in the teaching and learning process. Overall, the article provides valuable insights into the assessment practices of EFL teachers in Iran and could serve as a basis for further research in classroom-based assessment.

The fifth article by **Felix David Estrella Ibarra** explores whether using Facebook can reduce foreign language writing anxiety and improve the quality of students' assignments. The study uses a mixed methods design and includes 29 undergraduate students at a university in Ecuador. The quantitative section measures writing anxiety levels using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory and shows that anxiety levels decreased. The qualitative section uses a semi-structured interview to gather student opinions on Facebook, which supports the quantitative results. The study is important as it provides current data from a region with limited research on the topic, and identifies potential implications for administration and practice. This topic also highlights the potential of social media platforms to enhance language learning by providing learners with authentic opportunities to practice and improve their writing skills.

Last but not least, our sixth article by **Thao Vu** and **Lan Nguyen Thi Huong** examines teacher perception of the English language curriculum renewal in Vietnam. The study surveyed 347 teachers and conducted interviews with 16 teachers to explore their attitudes and understanding of the new curriculum. Results indicate that teachers have doubts and negative attitudes towards the curriculum goal, and an incomplete understanding of communicative language teaching (CLT) and identifies local challenges that may hinder the successful implementation of the new curriculum. The implications suggest the need to adapt CLT to the local context, prioritize teacher professional development, and implement structural changes to support the curriculum's success. More generally, this article highlights the importance of involving teachers in the curriculum development process to ensure that it meets the needs of learners and addresses existing problems.

On behalf of the editorial board, I express gratitude for your ongoing support. We hope that this compilation of articles and book reviews will capture the interest of our readers. We eagerly await the submission of high-quality content for future issues..

Daniel K.-G. Chan
Editor-in-Chief
Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching

Reference

Okri, B. (1995). *Birds of Heaven*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.