

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	10
List of Boxes	10
List of Figures	11
List of Tables	14
List of abbreviations and acronyms	15
Acknowledgements	17
Preface	21
Introduction	23
 PART A: Digital literacies and multimodal genres	 29
Chapter 1 Computer-assisted language learning: A historical account of language learning and technology	31
Chapter 2 From computer literacy to digital literacies	75
Chapter 3 Digital and multimodal literacies in foreign language learning	107
Chapter 4 Digital genres and multimodal meanings: Three examples from the field	147
 PART B: Digital media and the open movement in foreign language education	 185
Chapter 5 Understanding the open education movement	187
Chapter 6 Interactive textbooks for language learning	211
Chapter 7 Designing open educational resources	243
 Concluding note	 301
References	305
Index	347

PREFACE

My journey in digital technologies and foreign language education has been a long one. It started some decades ago, when I applied for a postgraduate degree course at the Institute of Education, University of London, back in the late 1980s, the only course in Britain at the time on the subject. The course was called *Specialist Diploma in Microcomputers in Education* and was run by the Department of Mathematics (back then it was mostly mathematicians who were involved in the field of computers in education). The course adopted a multi-disciplinary perspective, covering a variety of topics from psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and technology. At that time, there was a lot of enthusiasm in the academic community about the introduction of microcomputers in schools and their potential for educational change.

One significant thing though that I learned during my studies, and which followed me in the years to come, was the need to avoid the dominant *deterministic discourse* of the field, a discourse which was often uncritically embraced in educational contexts where it was widely thought that computers and multimedia technologies were capable of bringing positive results in education by themselves. Their introduction to the classroom, according to this prevailing deterministic view, would automatically improve learning and would bring educational change. It was clear to me that this promise of inevitable educational improvement, which was embedded in statements such as ‘computers are here to stay,’ offered a rather simplistic view and that the integration of technology entailed much more complex processes than simply equipping schools with hardware and software.

I came to understand that the focus instead should be on broader questions concerning what kinds of future citizens schools might wish to prepare and how this goal could be achieved. Looking at the big picture and adopting a critical approach to technology, my interest turned to theories of language and language learning which permeate educational practices and pedagogies. This critical perspective led me to critical theory and critical discourse analysis readings for my doctoral research and later to a literacy approach in educational linguistics. A few years later, my interest in these three fields of study, educational linguistics, critical discourse analysis and digital technologies in language education, were combined in an

analysis of online educational resources which resulted in a book titled *Rethinking online education: Media, ideologies and identities*, published by Routledge in 2015.

The above theoretical background has influenced my work on important projects over the last ten years which aimed to introduce a digital culture in Greek schools. Examples of these projects include the *Digital School* projects (2011-2021) which implemented the Greek national digital educational policy for primary and secondary education; the *AESOP* (Advanced Electronic Scenarios Operating Platform) project (2015) of the Institute of Educational Policy which initiated the transition towards advanced use of digital technologies in Greek education; and the *B-level ICT teacher training* project (2018-2021) which aimed to train teachers in all Greek schools in advanced pedagogical use of technology in the classroom. Another important project in this direction was the *KPG e-school* portal which addressed foreign language teachers, learners, parents and examiners regarding the Greek National Foreign Language Exam (known as KPG).

Co-ordinating the English and foreign language components of these projects has been a unique learning experience for me. Designing a principled approach to digital enrichment of English language textbooks and open educational resources, an online platform to host digital educational scenarios and a curriculum for the training of foreign language teachers in Greece have been some of the most challenging and fulfilling experiences during my academic career, urging me to put in practice various theories and to experiment with different methodologies and pedagogies.

Consequently, the above background has affected the author identity I bring to this book and ultimately its content and structure. As a result, I address readers from my multi-stranded professional identity as an educational linguist interested in literacy and critical approaches to language education exploring the integration of digital media and technologies in foreign language classrooms.

This book has been inspired by the work conducted with my undergraduate students at the Department of English Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens over the last ten years in two elective courses: *English and digital literacies: ICTs in English language teaching* and *Digital applications in foreign language education*. I would like to thank them for the fresh perspectives they have brought to these courses with their designs of digital content and for their engagement in the exploration of different aspects of the course through innovative project work. Much of what is presented in this book has been the subject of discussion and negotiation in these classes.

Athens, March 2022

INTRODUCTION

Somewhere on the outskirts of Athens, around 370 BC, Socrates runs into a student of his, Phaedrus, and they start a conversation about the art of rhetoric which is later described in one of Plato's works. An ardent supporter of dialogue as a means of developing knowledge, Socrates is rather sceptical about the new invention of writing and, interestingly enough, his description of writing is similar to what we might say today when describing a new technology.

His account of the technology of writing draws on two main contrasting discourses which are often found today in discussions about digital media. The first is a celebratory discourse addressing the positive aspects of this new invention and the things one can do with it. We read in the dialogue: "Once you start with it you can stop worrying about remembering things. It does it for you! You will be surprised at the clever things you can do with it. You will discover talents you never imagined you had." This celebratory discourse focuses on the positive aspects of the new technology of writing and the effects it might bring to the ways people learn.

The second discourse is a critical discourse outlining the negative effects that writing might bring to society: "people will depend on it", "they will stop thinking on their own", "it will not make you any smarter, it will only tell you what you already know." Socrates also raises a number of questions about the ways people will use writing: "Will people know how to use it?", "And what would our world be like if everyone depended on it?", "What about people who misuse the system?" and "How do we protect the information stored in this format?" Socrates was concerned about the potential to distort knowledge and its economy from the use of the new medium as well as its role and impact on democracy. These are very similar concerns to those which philosophers of language and sociologists have had over the centuries regarding newly introduced technologies, Blommaert reminds us.

In December 2020, in a talk titled "Old new media: how big issues reoccur whenever new media appear," sociolinguist and anthropologist Jan Blommaert reviewed the role of media in society over the centuries and suggested that issues

raised today about new media are strikingly similar to issues raised in the past. He claimed that discussion about new media in related literature (whether in regard to printed press, radio, films, TV or the Internet) has always been about two main issues. The first refers to *knowledge* and the distortion of its economy brought about by new media both in terms of *quantity*, as in the case of information overload (e.g. how to store it, to make it available and useful for all), and in terms of *quality of knowledge*, as in the case of intent and authorship (e.g. potential manipulation, propaganda, lies, etc.). The second issue relates to *democracy*. Acknowledging that media are essential in a mature democracy which needs informed citizens involved in democratic decision making, Blommaert asked how new media can be optimized to function as a vehicle of knowledge and an instrument for democracy. He proposed two answers to this question: the first, which directly relates to the scope of this book, is through *education*. Students need to be educated about new media and about their role as an instrument of democracy. The second answer to the question, according to Blommaert, is through *a new sociology* which does not employ an idealistic and normative view of new media (which, he claims, is what happens today), but analyses them for what they are, not what we would like them to be.

Being a discussant of his talk at the European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism (ECSPM) Symposium of 2020 – a talk which proved to be Blommaert's last public talk before his passing away a few weeks after the Symposium – I engaged in discussion with him and other participants on these ideas. Blommaert was of the opinion that while it is useful to look at the historicity of the matters we now experience as critical issues in society (and he does this quite thoroughly), at the same time we should avoid using old models to address new media. He claimed that this is unfortunately what happens today quite often in education as well as in other domains of public life.

This book is about digital media and technologies in language education. It is important to keep in mind that the questions and concerns presented above remain crucial up to the present day, even at the micro level of the individual foreign language classroom. In the social domain of education, our ultimate aim is to prepare learners to become critical citizens in a digital society, thus our broader scope always relates to knowledge construction and the development of a democratic ethos.

All seven chapters in this book adhere to the view that digital media and digital technologies cannot be adequately understood in terms of hardware and software or simply in terms of electronic tools and information. With the growing convergence of media, technology is blended with content creating new digital

media and providing new ways of communicating, mediating and representing the world. It is a matter of experience, not technology, according to Buckingham (2008), who claims that:

children are engaging with these media, not as technologies but as *cultural forms*. If educators wish to use these media in schools, they cannot afford to neglect these experiences: on the contrary, they need to provide students with means of understanding them (p. 74).

Adopting a critical perspective, the book approaches digital media as particular types of cultural forms, not as neutral means of delivering information. The underlying principle here is that in order for digital media to be effectively integrated in language education, both teachers and learners need to develop a critical semiotic awareness (Towndrow et al., 2013) that will allow them to understand, analyse and use digital media creatively (Gee & Hayes, 2011). The concept of digital literacies, defined as “practices in which people use technological tools to engage with, respond to, and create, both text-based and multimodal forms of literacies” (Avila & Pandya, 2012, p. 3), is important when approaching digital media as cultural forms (Godwin-Jones, 2015; Jones & Hafner, 2012).

The aim of this book is twofold: to explore different ways through which digital media can be integrated in the foreign language classroom in the context of open education; and to examine what it entails to integrate digital and multimodal literacies in language education by analysing language policies and policy documents (such as curricula, pedagogical models and frameworks) and key digital multimodal genres.

Book overview

The book comprises two parts: *Digital literacies and multimodal genres*, and *Digital media and the open movement in foreign language education*. The first part discusses theoretical and methodological issues placed within their socio-historical context and consists of four chapters. Chapter 1, *Computer-assisted language learning: A historical account of language learning and technology*, provides a historical account of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), a sub-field of applied linguistics particularly concerned with the use of technology in language learning. The chapter adopts a chronological framework and guides readers in a journey where technological developments are connected to language theories, theories

of learning and language teaching approaches. The historical account covers a period of over forty years, starting from around 1960 up to 2000. This chapter illustrates that technology, as a socio-historical construct, can only be understood within the sociocultural context in which it is embedded. The history of CALL also enables readers to get an overview of the ways different forms of technology and media have been used in foreign language learning and to develop a historical perspective of various features which are still being used today.

Chapter 2, *From computer literacy to digital literacies*, starts by examining three approaches to technology and language learning – the deterministic, the instrumental and the critical – each approach drawing on different discourses of technology and different assumptions about the role of technology in society. This account serves as a framework enabling readers to make connections between technology use in foreign language education and broader discourses of technology in society. The second part of the chapter discusses the transition which took place around the turn of the 21st century during which emphasis shifted from the concept of computer literacy to digital literacies. The concepts of computer literacy, ICT literacy and digital literacies are briefly discussed in relation to the changes they brought in our understanding of technology in educational contexts, particularly in language learning and teaching. Different types of digital literacies are also presented and digital competence European frameworks are described, with particular reference to learners, teachers and 21st century citizens.

Chapter 3, *Digital and multimodal literacies in foreign language learning*, examines the role of digital and multimodal literacies in foreign language education. The notion of communicative competence in the digital era is analysed along with a number of pedagogical models for digital literacies. This chapter argues for the need to move from language awareness to semiotic awareness pedagogical models which will effectively allow the integration of digital multimodal genres in foreign language practices. The chapter next examines a number of language curricula which have integrated digital and multimodal literacies and discusses their impact on other language policies, such as those related to language assessment.

Chapter 4, *Digital genres and multimodal meanings: Three examples from the field*, zooms into three digital multimodal genres – word clouds, infographics and digital stories – which are analysed for their potential to develop foreign language learners' multimodal literacies. A review of the three genres foregrounds the claim that semiotic frameworks are needed for the effective integration of digital media in foreign language teaching, learning and assessment.

The second part of the book deals with the open education movement and its impact on foreign language learning. Chapter 5, *Understanding the open education movement*, offers an account of the origins of open education and its main features in digital contexts. It discusses open education in relation to the wider movement of democratizing knowledge which provides open and free educational resources for all. The chapter analyzes the notions of Open Educational Resources (OERs), open textbooks and massive open online courses (MOOCs) and then presents the different types of Creative Commons licences which accompany OERs. The last part of the chapter discusses open educational practices and open pedagogies in the context of foreign language learning.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore open content for the teaching of English as a foreign language in primary and secondary education in the context of a large-scale project which is used as a case study. The Greek Digital School project is based on the principles of open education and has aimed to develop digital content in the form of interactive textbooks, OERs and digital repositories for hosting open content. Chapter 6, *Interactive textbooks for language learning*, starts with an introduction to different types of digital textbooks and discusses the case of the interactive EFL textbooks explaining the rationale of their design. It explains the notion of digital enrichment and outlines the methodology employed by the English group of the Greek Digital School project.

Finally, Chapter 7, *Designing open educational resources*, explores the design and development of different types of OERs for English language learning developed in the context of the Greek Digital School project. The overall purpose of this chapter is to familiarize readers with different types of open educational resources that may be used in the language classroom and to suggest ways for their integration. Adopting the perspective of the materials designers, the chapter explains the rationale and underlying pedagogies of these OERs, as well as the steps followed for their implementation. It is expected that this overview will encourage teachers to explore existing OERs in their teaching contexts.

While the book draws upon the field of English language teaching and learning, the issues it discusses actually concern the teaching of all languages. In this sense, the book addresses applied and educational linguists, educators, teacher trainers, foreign language teachers and university undergraduate and postgraduate students who are interested in the use of digital media in language education.