

Review of *Technology-enhanced teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language*

Frederick J. Poole, Utah State University

Technology-enhanced teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language

Navarre, A.

2019

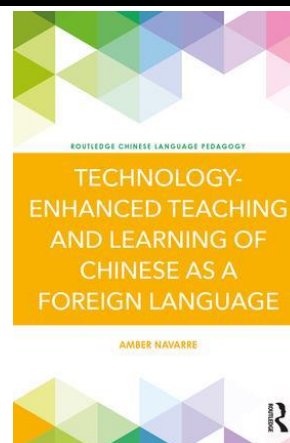
ISBN: 9781138188600

US \$ 39.95

174 pp.

Routledge

New York, NY



In the last few decades, the surge of new technology has permeated every aspect of our lives. Second language (L2) classrooms are no exception to this reality. As a result, L2 instructors are expected to utilize technology to increase instructional efficacy and provide better classroom management practices. Given the difficulties of learning Chinese as an L2, technology may be even more vital for improving L2 instruction in the Chinese as a foreign language classroom. While few would argue that such new technologies hinder L2 teaching and the L2 learning process, determining which technologies to employ and how to integrate them into instruction can be an overwhelming task for many L2 educators. Navarre's book, *Technology-enhanced teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language*, provides an outstanding practical guide for both novice and expert educators on the tools available for developing L2 Chinese proficiency skills and the principles that should be considered when integrating such tools into the classroom.

This book can be divided into three parts. In Part 1 (Chapters 1–3), Navarre provides a detailed argument for the use of technology in the L2 classroom, outlines the principles and factors that educators should consider when integrating technology into the classroom, and briefly summarizes theoretical perspectives on L2 teaching and acquisition. In Part 2 (Chapters 5–6), Navarre details how technology can enhance specific L2 Chinese skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) while also providing readers with an exhaustive list of tools to accomplish those goals. Finally, in Part 3 (Chapters 6–7), Navarre demonstrates how technology affords educators unique teaching opportunities (digital storytelling and flipped classroom) and gives readers a detailed example of how to design and plan such lessons. She concludes her books with a set of additional resources, including games and management systems, and then provides a look toward the future of technology in the Chinese L2 classroom.

In Chapter 1, Navarre provides an overview of the arguments that support using technology in the classroom. These arguments include access to authentic learning materials, the expansion of learning experiences, individual learning, responsive feedback, diverse assessment tools, the ability to collaborate, and life-long self-learning. The chapter concludes by summarizing some of the external factors that push educators toward implementing technology in the classroom.

Chapter 2 focuses on the factors that educators should consider when choosing to implement a tool into a learning context. These factors are broken down into three *filters*: the student, the design, and the tool. In terms of the student, Navarre argues that educators should not only consider language proficiency and age, but also take into account technology proficiency. This is an insightful point to make, given that it is often assumed in research that because students are digital natives, they are all experts with technology. This is clearly not true for all learners. For the design filter, Navarre illustrates both an effective design approach and how to integrate one's design with current language learning standards (e.g., ACTFL or CEFR guidelines). Finally, for the third filter, a set of guidelines is provided to select a tool that accommodates both the student and the design filters.

Chapter 3 summarizes principles and theoretical perspectives associated with language learning and then illustrates how technology can benefit each of the core elements related to good language teaching. The author divides this chapter into input, output, and feedback. The section on input largely focuses on Krashen's (1982) theory of comprehensible input and discusses not only how technology can provide appropriate reading material, but also how input can be manipulated to increase the likelihood that learners notice target vocabulary and grammar structures. When discussing output, Navarre builds on Swain's (1985) work and reviews the principles of comprehensible output. She then provides a list of technologies and ideas for realizing those principles in the Chinese classroom. Finally, Navarre summarizes the different types of feedback often provided in L2 classrooms and demonstrates how technology can enhance the effects of feedback on the L2 learning process. This chapter provides a succinct review of L2 learning theories, yet sociocultural theory (SCT) perspectives were notably absent from this chapter. This is somewhat surprising given that SCT is often associated with implementation of technology in the L2 classroom.

The next two chapters focus on how technology can be used to develop specific aspects of Chinese L2 proficiency. In Chapter 4, Navarre discusses how technology can be used to improve oral skills. Specifically, she illustrates how technology can be used to create materials, provide opportunities for a wide range of oral tasks, and improve Chinese pronunciation and intonation. In the chapter, oral skills are divided into interpretive-mode tasks, interpersonal-mode tasks, and presentational-mode tasks. For each mode, Navarre provides a list of tools and lesson ideas that are specific to the Chinese language.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the use of technology for the development of literacy skills. In this chapter, the author touts the many resources that are available to educators for providing learners with both graded reading materials and authentic, proficiency-appropriate material. Navarre further demonstrates how technology can be used to provide creative and engaging writing activities, collaborative reading environments, and teacher-specific tools that enhance feedback provided to learners. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are extremely useful and contain several ideas and suggestions for developing L2 Chinese proficiency skills in the classroom with the support of technology.

In the last two chapters, Navarre provides examples of how technology affords educators unique teaching opportunities. More specifically, in Chapter 6, Navarre discusses how technology can be used for digital story-telling activities or for the creation of a flipped classroom. Unlike previous chapters, this chapter provides a detailed, step-by-step approach to both designing and planning lessons using digital storytelling tools. Not being familiar with digital story telling tools, I found this chapter both enlightening and inspirational. Navarre illustrates not only how digital story telling activities are meaningful and motivational for L2 learners, but also how they benefit learners' L2 skills via multiple ways in which learners are expected to interact with language during the project. Another benefit of these projects, that was not mentioned, is that students have the opportunity to develop digital literacy skills in addition to L2 skills.

Finally, in Chapter 7, Navarre combines other resources and applications of technology that are not mentioned in previous chapters. This includes learning management systems (LMSs), online communities for sharing teacher resources, and game-based learning or gamification. For learning management systems, Navarre first gives the reader a list of LMS environments. Instead of providing details on LMS

environments, Navarre discusses three tools that she deems useful for the language learning classroom. In terms of games and gamification, Navarre discusses the use of Quizlet, Kahoot, ClassDojo, and Classcraft in the classroom. The chapter ends with a list of teacher resource sharing communities and some reassuring thoughts for language teachers who want to implement technology into their classroom.

The strengths of this book lie in its practical approach to teaching Chinese as a foreign language with technology and in the number of resources in each chapter. Navarre expertly demonstrates the relationships between the tools presented in this book and the specific skills that can be targeted. In addition, each chapter is full of examples of activities and sample lesson plans that involve the use of technology and its implementation into the classroom. Furthermore, in many cases, Navarre illustrates how the example activities and sample lesson plans relate to ACTFL or CEFR standards. Another major benefit of this book comes at the end of each chapter. Navarre provides readers with an exhaustive list of tools that can be used to accomplish the skills and goals discussed in the chapter. I will keep this book close at hand, if only for this resource. Finally, the detailed lesson provided in Chapter 6 is a wonderful model for both lesson planning and integrating new technology into the classroom.

While this book is extremely valuable and useful for Chinese L2 instructors, there are a few shortcomings. First, when discussing the theoretical perspectives that support the use of technology in Chapter 3, Navarre largely focuses on cognitive aspects, leaving out the sociocultural aspects. Many of the tools that were mentioned in this book come with the cultural baggage of their developers. In Chapter 2, Navarre seems to touch on this issue when discussing the importance of taking into account student age, but she does not expand on it in Chapter 3. Furthermore, when integrating any tool into the classroom, educators should be aware of how using one tool to mediate an L2 learning activity in lieu of another affects not only what is noticed and acquired by the learner, but also the L2 learning process. For instance, using an electronic glossing tool instead of a traditional dictionary may allow learners to read faster and to be exposed to more words in a shorter time period. But, glossing tools tend to provide fewer options for definitions, thus removing the opportunity for learners to compare potential definitions of a word in context. Another shortcoming of this book is its coverage of game-based learning and gamification. Navarre defines *game-based learning* as using a game for educational purposes, in contrast to *gamification* which uses game design in a non-game context. This distinction is adequate. The problem lies in the examples provided for game-based learning: Quizlet and Kahoot, among other similar software. Such software essentially provides a reward system for vocabulary recognition tasks (non-game context), and thus could and should be associated with gamification. There is a growing body of literature associated with Chinese L2 game-based learning in which educators use games specifically designed for developing L2 Chinese skills (e.g., McGraw, Yoshimoto, & Seneff, 2009; Ming, Ruan, & Gao, 2013; Zheng, 2012). Finally, it should be noted that given the practical nature of this book and the exhaustive list of technologies provided, a longer discussion on SLA theoretical perspectives or on the difference between game-based learning and gamification may not have been feasible.

Overall, this book is well-organized, easy to access, and provides a quick reference to an abundance of tools available to L2 Chinese instructors. I strongly recommend this book to every novice Chinese foreign language teacher who is new to the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Not only does Navarre provide readers with an accessible and relevant overview of SLA principles, but her detailed description of designing a flipped classroom in Chapter 6 is a great model for future educators to follow.

References

- Krashen, S. T. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press.
- McGraw, I., Yoshimoto, B., & Seneff, S. (2009). Speech-enabled card games for incidental vocabulary acquisition in a foreign language. *Speech Communication, 51*(10), 1006–1023.

Ming, Y., Ruan, Q., & Gao, G. (2013). A Mandarin edutainment system integrated virtual learning environments. *Speech Communication, 55*(1), 71–83.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Zheng, D. (2012). Caring in the dynamics of design and languaging: Exploring second language learning in 3D virtual spaces. *Language Sciences, 34*(5), 543–558.

About the Author

Frederick Poole is a Graduate Research Assistant in Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences at Utah State University. His research interests include digital game-based language learning, technology-based collaboration, and dual language immersion programs.

E-mail: frederick.poole@aggiemail.usu.edu