10 years of the LLAS elearning symposium: An introduction

Kate Borthwick[1], Erika Corradini[2], and Alison Dickens[3]

Welcome to this LLAS edited collection. This e-book is a celebration of and reflection on 10 years of the LLAS elearning symposium, an event which is run by the Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies based at the University of Southampton, UK.

1.   What is LLAS?

The Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) was founded in 2000 as one of 24 Higher Education Academy[4] subject centres. Over time it has built a reputation for providing support to the wider languages, linguistics and area studies communities through its regular conferences, workshops and innovative projects which provide professional development and networking opportunities to teachers in the higher education and school sectors. More recently it has also become a successful enterprise unit within Modern Languages at the University of Southampton, which works in partnership with universities around the world to deliver bespoke professional development courses or develop collaborative projects.

1. University of Southampton, United Kingdom; k.borthwick@soton.ac.uk.

2. University of Southampton, United Kingdom; e.corradini@soton.ac.uk.

3. University of Southampton, United Kingdom; a.m.dickens@soton.ac.uk.

4. www.heacademy.ac.uk

2.   The LLAS elearning symposium

From rather modest beginnings this annual event has grown and been shaped by the wide and changing landscape of digital technologies. It began life in 2005 as a one-day event at which invited expert presenters gave us insights into topics such as mobile learning, re-useable learning objects and e-tutoring, much of which was new to us and probably to many others in the audience. It is now a two-day event, packed with presentations, workshops, technical showcases, poster sessions, and live-streamed keynote talks. It also has a virtual presence through Twitter[1], scoop.it[2] and the LLAS website[3].

It was at our first event that many of us first heard about web 2.0 from Professor (now Dame) Wendy Hall from the University of Southampton. Although this concept had been around for some time it had only just started to become widely used and the types of tools to which it referred were by no means as ubiquitous as they are today and certainly not routinely used in teaching. Moving through its subsequent 10 years the symposium has evolved to include a much wider range of experts, including those language teachers who initially formed the audience at the symposium, but who have subsequently showcased the many ways in which elearning tools and resources have been built into their own teaching. This reflects a key aim for the symposium that the main focus should be on the pedagogic benefits of incorporating technologies into course and learning design rather than on the tools themselves. Although, it is clear that the increasing range of tools and resources available to us and our students does play a significant role in the development of innovative, authentic and relevant teaching and learning practice.

Thus, our event has evolved from a forum at which elearning novices came to learn from the 'technology experts', such as Dame Wendy Hall and the many others who have been keynote presenters at the symposium over the years, to

---

1. @elearnllas #elearnllas

2. http://www.scoop.it/t/e-learning-symposium

3. www.llas.ac.uk

a meeting space for 'subject practitioner experts' to meet each other and share their practice. And this, in our view, has been a major contributor to the success of the symposium and to its longevity.

3. Content

In this volume, we hear from colleagues who have engaged with the symposium over the years, many of whom initially attended the event to learn from the experts and who have over the years metamorphosed into those very experts from whom others come to learn. They reflect on and celebrate this transformative dimension of the symposium in the case studies and personal reflections included in this edited collection.

This ebook is structured around four sections. Each section begins with an invited contribution and contains articles related to the broad thematic area introduced in the invited piece. This structure deliberately reflects the alternation of keynote plenary sessions and talks which has been the distinct format of the elearning symposium in the past ten years. The book is aimed at practitioners and as such recounts real, practical experiences of innovation in using technology in language teaching or professional practice. The authors' work is based in research, but they all present lived examples of excellent practice in action. The range of projects and case studies presented in this e-volume is a testament to the irrepressible creativity of language teachers in their adoption of technology to achieve their pedagogic aims.

Over the past ten years, the symposium has followed the innovations brought about in the digital realm and has offered a yearly forum where technology and education have met. As some of the invited pieces show, the journey of technology in education has been a long and exciting one. Along the way, as all the contributions suggest, the symposium has brought innovative practice to the attention of teachers and learners and, perhaps more significantly for the connected world in which we operate, it has been a catalyst for the formation of an enthusiastic community – as this editorial project clearly shows.

Marion Sadoux's personal journey with technology opens up Section 1. *Language learning in new contexts: mobile learning*. Starting from a language centre in the 1980s, she takes us from the clumsy physicality of audio cassettes right into the future, when as director of the Language Centre at University of Nottingham Ningbo (China), she tells us about her work with new digital communities in what is, as yet, a little known educational landscape. This section also features two case studies. Billy Brick's and Tiziana Cervi-Wilson's piece is centred on how in recent years the use of mobile technology for learning languages has gone beyond classroom walls. This study shows that it is now common practice among learners to use mobile devices for learning, and that devices or software which integrate traditional resources into mobile learning are in great demand. Fernando Rosell-Aguilar takes the key issues of mobile learning into the specific area of podcasting. By describing the innovations podcasting for language learning and teaching has undergone in the past ten years, Rosell-Aguilar's chapter brings to the reader's attention new ways of using podcasts when learning a language with suggestions about new formats and new practices.

Section 2. *Collaboration and open learning* is introduced by an expert in the field, Marina Orsini-Jones, from Coventry University. Through her ongoing commitment to technology-enhanced teaching and learning, Orsini-Jones takes us from CALL in its initial stages through to her latest project/s in telecollaboration for language learning. Her chapter explains the pedagogic principles underpinning her work and describes how technology can support the development of intercultural competence. Teresa MacKinnon's piece complements Orsini-Jones's article by describing the design of a large-scale blended learning environment for the Institution-Wide Language Programme (IWLP) at the University of Warwick. The aim of this project is twofold: to offer support to teachers in elearning and to allow them to network more effectively in a concerted effort to bring together 'participatory communities'. Jean-Christophe Penet explains how e-portfolios can be used as social media tools for language learners and for incorporating peer-learning into the broader area of elearning and virtual collaboration. Tita Beaven, meanwhile, focuses on the (re-)use of OER (Open Education Resources) by offering examples of how language teachers have unlocked the pedagogic potential of openly

shared resources and adapted them to their own teaching needs and contexts. Anna Motzo and Debora Quattrocchi show how the open practices outlined in Beaven's chapter have been used in a project which features the collaborative design of OER for dyslexic learners of languages. Learning with dyslexia is a new area of pedagogic interest which deserves the attention of language teachers, as the authors suggest.

Julie Watson's piece opens Section 3. *Fostering creativity in the classroom*. Learning design is the focus of her piece and an area that Watson has developed through many projects involving the creation of online resources, courses and tools. The impact of her work is immediately visible in the first case study of this section in which Christine Penman explains how she put into practice Watson's work in the area of creating learning objects through using the LOC software. In particular, Penman describes the creative process underpinning the production of a series of resources centred on the combined study of language and literature. Ania Rolińska offers an example of learning technology at its most creative. Working with international students, she facilitated a project aimed at the production of visual artefacts resulting from the students' engagement with digital literacy and hypermedia. Edith Kreutner brings creativity to the teaching of grammar, an area often perceived as unexciting. Kreutner explains how movie making applied to grammar learning has engaged learners and empowered them throughout the learning process. This is an innovative project in an area that is currently experiencing revived interest and excitement. The final two case studies in this section relate technology and language learning to real-life scenarios. Aidan Yeh gives an account of a project carried out in a private university in Taiwan in the area of business English. The project's focus is to use technology to simulate real-life business situations for language learning. In a similar way to Yeh's, Juliet Vine's closing case study shows that the complexity of teaching translation can be addressed through using Wikis in ways which replicate real professional scenarios. Both of these projects offer students transferable, employability skills alongside their language skills.

Section 4. *New tools, new practices* begins with Benoît Guilbaud writing about connected learning and networked communities of practitioners. This

5

article narrates Guilbaud's personal experience as a tutor and suggests that teaching practices are increasingly defined by the use of technology, whether collaborative tools or new engaging platforms and/or software. Sascha Stollhans, for example, introduces us to the use of Voxopop for learning German. Voxopop is a new platform which allows users to engage in discussions and exchange of ideas orally rather than in writing. This innovative aspect is, Stollhans suggests, beneficial to learners as they can record themselves and learn by listening in a friendly and easily accessible way. Learning through the production of audio books is the focus of Susana Lorenzo-Zamorano's chapter. Her piece reports the outcomes of a student-centred project which brought the use of tablet technology to the pedagogy of language, Spanish in this particular case. Rocío Baños and Stavroula Sokoli describe how the ClipFlair project inspired and motivated learners through re-voicing and captioning activities, now collected as resources in an easily accessible repository featuring 350 resources covering 15 different languages. Alannah Fitzgerald, Shaoqun Wu and María José Marín close this section with a chapter describing their innovative work with open access collections of corpus-based materials. They present a new, open source tool (FLAX) and show how a project working with English-language students has led to the adoption of open educational practices by teachers, and enabled students to take greater control and ownership over their own language learning.

4.   And finally… thank you!

We hope that the case studies and personal learning journeys recounted here will be interesting and inspiring to you. They depict aspects of the development of technology-use in language teaching over the last ten years from the personal perspectives of people 'at the coalface' of teaching and learning. They also provide a snapshot of current good practice in using technology for teaching.

It has been a pleasure for us to read and collect the pieces together for this book. We have learnt much from them, and we learn new ideas and approaches each year that we run the symposium. We would like to thank everyone who

has contributed to the elearning symposium itself, as participant, practice sharer, keynote presenter, workshop facilitator, online viewer, sponsor or as part of the organisation team. Technological innovation moves so fast that, like this book, each symposium only ever provides a snapshot in time, but we hope that the elearning symposium will continue to offer 'snapshots' for many more years to come.

Research-publishing.net

10 years of the LLAS elearning symposium: case studies in good practice
Edited by Kate Borthwick, Erika Corradini, & Alison Dickens