Digital Citizenship, Digital Wilds and Language Learning & Teaching

Conference of the European project *Lingu@num*
University of Salzburg (Austria), Language Centre
24.-25. November 2022

As the Internet emerged, hopes were raised that this new technology would open up the classroom to the "real world", that it would allow to go beyond the confines of the four walls of the classroom and lead to a degree of authenticity that had never been achieved before (Rüschoff, 1997; Warschauer, 1996); an authenticity that was once considered illusory in the context of language teaching and learning.

Despite these hopes for an opening to the 'real world' beyond the classroom and authentic communication with real people, practice and research initially focused on the implementation and analysis of teletandem and telecollaboration projects allowing learning across distance (Belz, 2003; O'Dowd, 2018). While this widened the scale of the classroom, the socio-interactional context did not really change, since the interactions often remained comparable to interactions within the walls of a face-to-face classroom setting (Lamy & Zourou, 2013, p. 3).

Only in recent years there has been a greater interest in a real opening up to the world and a learning in the so-called 'digital wilds' (Sauro & Zourou, 2019), 'beyond the classroom' (Benson & Reinders, 2011; Comas-Quinn et al., 2019) or 'extramural English' (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). While research initially focused on the analysis of English learners' practices on participatory fanfiction and online game sites (Black, 2008; de Freitas, 2006; Kramsch et al., 2000; Sauro, 2017; Thorne et al, 2009; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019), research now also includes – from a 'rewilding' perspective – the transposition of these practices and their integration into language teaching/learning (Thorne et al., 2021).

In this context, work has been conducted, for example, on the didactic use of fanfiction practices in the context of language teaching (Brunel, 2021; Petitjean & Brunel, 2018; Sauro & Sundmark, 2016; Sauro & Thorne, 2020; Thorne et al., 2015).

Other work, closer to the aspirations emerged in the 1990s, focuses on participatory projects and tasks carried out by learners online on freely accessible websites. These tasks, which we refer to as 'real-life tasks' within the projects *Babelweb, Lingu@num* and e-*lang / e-lang citizen* projects (Caws et al., 2021; Ollivier & Project e-lang, 2018), allow learners to socially (inter-)act beyond the framework of institutional education. They have found their way into a range of different disciplines (Lammers et al., 2012; Magnifico et al., 2018), including language didactics.

The literature on this topic highlights the multiple benefits of such tasks. They enable learners to use their target languages in natural contexts (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011; Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019), they help them to construct a specific identity in the language used (Hannibal Jensen, 2019; Shafirova & Cassany, 2019), and to make the transition from their role as a learner to the role of a user or even an expert in the topics covered (Sundqvist, 2019). The tasks make learners use the language in a meaningful and authentic way, the primary aim being communication, not language learning (Hannibal Jensen, 2019; Ollivier, 2010). They also involve different types of learning processes.

Real-world tasks also play a central role in the development of multiple literacies including – depending on the concrete task – creative or artistic dimensions (Black, 2009), plurilingual literacy, socialization competencies (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009) as well as digital literacy (Bigot et al., 2021; Hannibal Jensen, 2019; Ollivier & Project e-lang, 2018).

More recently, digital literacy has been supplemented by the dimension of digital citizenship (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017). In fact, contributing to online participatory sites and projects and, more generally, communicating through digital means requires specific skills, knowledge, competencies, attitudes and a certain awareness related to citizenship. Users of languages and technologies are required to (inter-)act and take into account the rights and responsibilities associated with the values of different communities in which they are involved (Ollivier et al., 2021). Several international projects have emerged during the last years linking digital citizenship education and language learning & teaching, including *DICE.lang*, *PENSA*, *e-lang citizen* and *Lingu@num*.

Some critical voices point out tensions caused by participation in online sites and communities in formal learning settings. Magnifico et al (2018) note that the values of the communities that learners are encouraged to communicate with do not necessarily match the learners' values, and that such participation can lead to high levels of exposure, resulting in a sense of vulnerability. Godwin-Jones (2015) mentions teachers' uncertainty about learners' 'unforeseeable and unstructured' uses on open platforms that do not correspond to the institutional customs. Sockett and Toffoli (Sockett, 2012; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010) also point out potential reservations on the part of the learners due to the socio-interactional context. If learners carry out activities only to meet teacher expectations, the added value of authentic interactions beyond the teacher-learner relationship is nullified.

This conference is intended to facilitate scientific exchanges on the possibilities of linking language teaching and learning with digital wilds. The benefits but also the limitations of real-world tasks will be discussed, especially – but not exclusively – in relation to language education, the development of digital literacy and/or citizenship, identity and motivation.

Call for Papers

The conference welcomes papers related to formal, informal and non-formal language learning, irrespective of the status of the languages concerned (first language, second language, school language, foreign language, regional language, etc.). Papers on participatory online practices providing insights into language teaching and learning are also welcome.

Papers may address, but are not limited to, the following aspects

- learning through participatory online practices
- learning in digital wilds
- online games
- didactic implementation of participatory online practices
- real-world tasks
- digital citizenship education and language training
- digital literacy education and language teaching & learning
- citizen science and language teaching & learning

Papers may include:

- data-driven research
- theoretical reflections
- experience from practice

Proposals for papers must be submitted via the conference tool no later than 10 June 2022:

https://linguanum.sciencesconf.org

Proposals should include the name(s) of the author(s), the institutional affiliation, a title, a 500-word abstract with a maximum of five references.

Papers may be submitted in English, German and French. The language of the proposal will be the language of presentation (20 minutes + 10 minutes of discussion).

Proposals will be double-blind reviewed by the scientific committee.

Plenary speakers

Steven Thorne, University of Portland

Christiane Lütge, Universität München

Important dates

Opening of the call for papers: 08/04/2022

Deadline for submission of proposals: 10/06/2022

Notification of acceptance: 08/07/2022

Deadline for conference registration: 10/11/2022

Conference dates: 24-25 November 2022, University of Salzburg (Austria)

Registration fees

Participation in the conference is free of charge.

A joint dinner is planned on 24.11. (costs are not covered).

Organisation

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Christoph Hülsmann, Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg (coordination)

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29. Kossi Seto Yibokou, Université de Lorraine

Publication of papers

Contributions in English, German or French can be submitted for possible publication in a volume of the journal *Alsic* on the topic "Digital Citizenship and Language Teaching & Learning" (coordination: Marco Cappellini, Marta Giralt and Christian Ollivier).

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