

REVIEWS

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Technology-Mediated Language Learning and Teaching

Vurdien, R. & Chambers, W. (Eds.)

IGI Global, 2024

460 pp.

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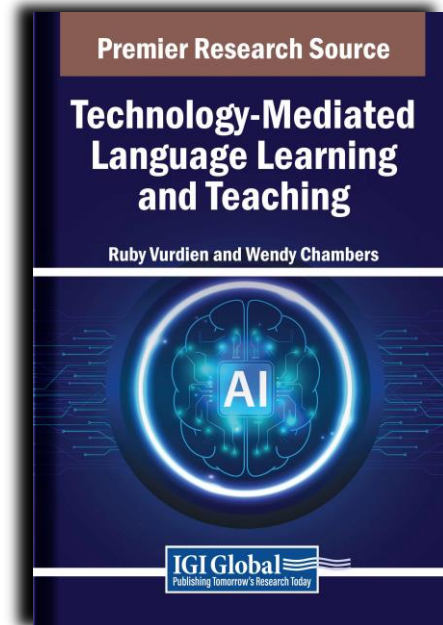
Education is changing quickly because of new technology being used in classrooms. *Technology-Mediated Language Learning and Teaching*, edited by R. Vurdien and W. Chambers, which belongs to the collection *Advances in Educational Technologies*

and Instructional Design (AETID), is an important resource that looks at how digital tools are shaping language learning. It covers topics like online learning, virtual and augmented reality, gamification, and mobile apps for language education. Each chapter explores how technology can improve teaching and learning, offering both research-based ideas and real-world examples. The book does not just focus on the positives—it also discusses the challenges teachers and students face when using digital tools. This review will go over some of the key chapters and explain why this book is important for understanding how technology is changing education.

The volume begins by an excellent introductory chapter that sets the foundation for the discussions that follow. The book includes an extensive bibliography, reinforcing its academic rigor and credibility. Chapter 1, authored by Mesay Andualem Tegegne, investigates students' preferences between fully online and blended learning modalities in a LINC program, revealing that sociodemographic factors, rather than digital literacy, primarily influence these choices. It also examines the effects of these modalities on digital skills, language acquisition, and student satisfaction.

In Chapter 2, Tricia K. Thrasher, Maria Christoforou, and Amelia Ijiri explore the potential of virtual reality (VR) for immersive language learning by analyzing a case study conducted through the Immerse VR platform. Their findings highlight the engaging yet still experimental nature of VR in education.

Chapter 3, by Shinji Okumura, focuses on virtual exchange (VE) programs in Japan, showing that VE significantly enhances students' motivation and intercultural understanding, aligning with the country's educational technology goals.



Svea Carolyn Wucherpennig, in Chapter 4, studies the implementation of the chatbot application ChatClass in a German EFL classroom, demonstrating how digital scaffolding can facilitate speaking practice and language development.

Chapter 5, written by Armanda R. Stroia and Daniel Xerri, discusses the benefits of collaborative multimodal storytelling projects, emphasizing their role in fostering creativity and engagement in language learning.

In Chapter 6, Nga Thi Thuy Nguyen and Trang Thi Quynh Phan examine virtual mentoring programs for ESL teachers, finding that such mentorship enhances educators' confidence and competence in integrating educational technology.

Chapter 7, by Ana María Gimeno-Sanz, Mar Gutiérrez-Colón, and Marni Manegre, which in my opinion is one of the most appealing chapters, analyzes mobile language learning apps, concluding that the effectiveness of these tools depends on the pedagogical strategies they employ and the degree of interactivity they provide.

Ruby Vurdien, in Chapter 8, investigates the Socrative app's effectiveness in teaching phrasal verbs to Spanish EFL students, demonstrating its positive impact on engagement and retention.

Chapter 9, by Anna Soltyska, looks into the role of online language support tools in EFL exam preparation, emphasizing the importance of familiarizing students with digital resources to optimize learning outcomes.

Isabel Pizarro-Sánchez and Leonor Pérez-Ruiz, in Chapter 10, explore the use of digital technologies in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) writing, highlighting their potential in fostering learner autonomy and improving writing skills.

Chapter 11, authored by Kayo Shintaku, examines the application of augmented reality (AR) mobile games in Japanese language instruction, showcasing their ability to create engaging and interactive learning experiences. Lastly,

Chapter 12, by Yalun Zhou and Michael Wei, presents a systematic review of gamification in English language learning, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing motivation and engagement while also acknowledging the challenges of implementation.

Overall, the book offers a rich and interdisciplinary perspective on the integration of educational technology, making it an essential resource for educators, researchers, and policymakers seeking to understand and apply innovative digital tools in language instruction.

Technology-Mediated Language Learning and Teaching is an important addition to the study of language education and teaching methods. It gives a balanced view of how digital tools are used in teaching, discussing both their benefits and the challenges they bring. This book

is a valuable resource for teachers, researchers, and policymakers who want to understand the future of educational technology. Each chapter includes detailed research, helpful insights, and creative ideas that can improve language learning in different situations. One of the best things about this book is that it connects different fields, such as teaching methods, technology, and language studies. The chapters are not only well-researched, but also very useful for real classrooms. Topics like virtual reality, gamification, digital support tools, and augmented reality offer a broad look at new teaching innovations. Since technology is changing the way we teach and learn, *Technology-Mediated Language Learning and Teaching* is a must-read for anyone interested in education and technology. It is highly recommended for teachers who want to stay updated with new teaching methods and for researchers looking to study the latest developments in the field.



Reviewed by

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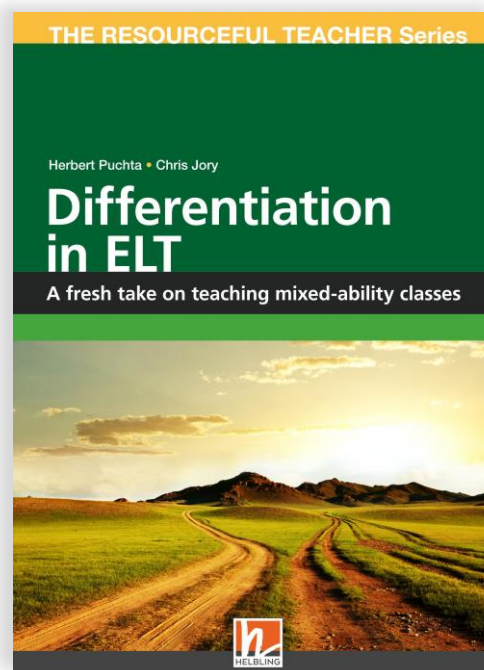
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Differentiation in ELT
A fresh take on teaching
mixed-ability classes

Herbert Puchta & Chris Jory
 Helbling, 2024
 235 pp
 ISBN 978-3-37114-0242-4



Overview

[*Differentiation in ELT: A fresh take on teaching mixed-ability classes*](#) offers a comprehensive approach to addressing the diverse needs of language learners. The authors present a compelling case for differentiated instruction, grounded in research and the "new science of learning," emphasizing its positive impact on student achievement and potential.

Contents

Herbert Puchta and Chris Jory offer a well-rounded approach to addressing the challenges of mixed-ability classrooms in English Language Teaching (ELT). The book’s strength lies in its clear integration of theory with practical, evidence-based strategies, making it an invaluable resource for both novice and experienced teachers. The authors explore the concept of differentiated instruction in depth, emphasizing its positive influence on student achievement, motivation, and potential. The six guiding principles provide a solid framework for adapting teaching methods to the varied needs of learners. This comprehensive resource truly shines through its innovative teaching activities designed to engage students of all proficiency levels.

The structure is logically organized, beginning with the foundational theory behind differentiation and progressing to practical implementation strategies. Chapter 1 provides an insightful exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of differentiation, backed by research evidence, and supported by High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS). The authors encourage teachers to rethink traditional teaching methods, and adopt a more flexible, student-centred approach. They advocate for the use of multiple methods that cater to learners’ diverse needs, ranging from Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to Work Stations, all of which foster inclusivity and promote learner agency. The diversity of methods presented ensures that teachers can pick and adapt strategies that align with their classroom context.

In Chapter 2, the authors outline specific strategies for differentiation in mixed-ability classrooms. The focus is on providing practical, adaptable techniques for all aspects of language learning, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. By offering varied task difficulty, providing tiered reading texts, and incorporating student choice, the authors encourage teachers to create lessons that allow for individualized learning paths while still maintaining a sense of group cohesion. This approach not only supports learners' current abilities, but also fosters independence and motivation by giving them a sense of ownership over their learning journey.

One of the standout features of the book is the diverse collection of practical activities for differentiating instruction across all four language skills. In Chapter 3, for example, *Predictive Bingo* serves as an innovative strategy to activate prior knowledge before listening tasks. This technique involves having students predict key vocabulary they might hear in the listening activity. It not only warms up the students for the task ahead, but also gives them the opportunity to tailor the difficulty of the task to their own comfort levels. By allowing students to select the number of words or phrases, this activity caters to learners with varying levels of vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension skills. More importantly, the emphasis is placed on comprehension, and not on correctness, which helps build students' confidence.

In Chapter 4, the focus shifts to speaking strategies, where the authors introduce *Dictogloss* and *Shadowing*. These activities allow students to work together in pairs or small groups, fostering collaboration and peer learning. *Dictogloss* involves students listening to a short passage, and then working together to reconstruct it. Differentiation comes into play through the adjustment of text length, speed, and group size, allowing students of different abilities to engage with the activity at their own level. Similarly, *Shadowing* provides an opportunity for learners to imitate native speaker intonation and pronunciation, with modifications based on proficiency. These strategies promote both communicative competence and linguistic accuracy, helping students develop speaking skills in an interactive and supportive way.

Chapter 5 delves into reading strategies, emphasizing the importance of activating prior knowledge before tackling new texts. Techniques such as brainstorming and categorizing related vocabulary prepare students to connect new information with what they already know. Additionally, the use of visual aids and sounds stimulates discussion and creative thinking, ensuring that students with diverse learning styles are equally engaged. These strategies promote deeper comprehension and retention of reading material, encouraging active participation through group discussions and peer sharing.

Writing instruction is particularly well-supported in Chapter 6, with the use of “sentence stems, sentence frames, and substitution frames.” These tools help scaffold writing tasks by providing students with a structure to follow. Sentence stems offer open-ended prompts that guide students in forming complete sentences, while sentence frames are pre-constructed templates that learners complete by filling in gaps. These activities are particularly effective for helping students at different writing levels feel confident and organized, fostering their ability to express complex ideas clearly. This chapter emphasizes the importance of building confidence through structured yet flexible writing tasks that cater to varied skill levels.

Grammar and vocabulary development are explored in Chapter 7 with a focus on expanding vocabulary through “synonyms and antonyms.” The use of related words helps reinforce lexical relationships and enhances retention. Practical activities such as categorization exercises and collaborative sentence creation encourage active engagement, and allow students to use new vocabulary in context. By tailoring vocabulary tasks to various proficiency levels, the authors ensure that all students benefit from targeted learning experiences that expand their vocabulary repertoire.

Finally, Chapter 8 emphasizes the integration of digital tools and memory techniques for differentiated teaching. The authors introduce a range of technological resources, such as adjustable audio speeds for listening activities and multiple versions of reading texts, to support students at different comprehension levels. These tools help create a dynamic, flexible learning environment where technology complements traditional methods, making learning more accessible to every student.

Conclusion

Differentiation in ELT: A Fresh Take on Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes stands out for its thoughtful and highly practical activities designed to meet the diverse needs of learners. The authors provide a set of strategies that can be adapted to different age groups, though its primary suitability lies with secondary learners (12–16 years old).

While some strategies could be adjusted for primary students (8–11 years old), they may require significant modifications to accommodate their cognitive development and language proficiency. Teachers working with younger learners would need to introduce additional scaffolding, visual aids, and simplified instructions to ensure accessibility. For secondary learners, the book offers a comprehensive and highly applicable approach to differentiation, fostering engagement, independence, and deeper language acquisition.

For beginning teachers, this book is a valuable resource that simplifies the process of differentiation in mixed-ability classrooms. While some strategies may require adaptation or additional practice, the clear explanations, structured approach, and practical focus make this a highly suitable resource for educators looking to develop inclusive, engaging, and effective teaching practices.



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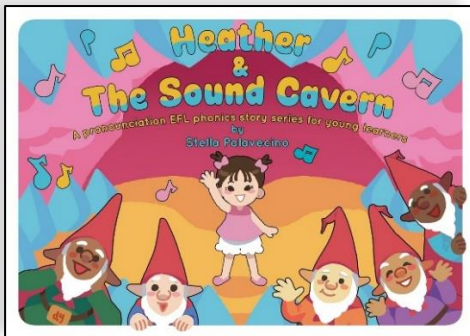
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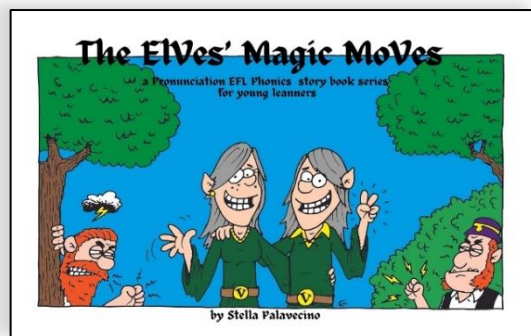
***‘Emo-Pron’ Stories: An EFL phonics approach
to teach pronunciation to Young Learners***

Stella Palavecino

Buenos Aires English House ELT Publishing Books



2024
13 pp.
ISBN-10 6310024086



2023
15 pp.
ISBN-10 9878882500

This review examines two books from Stella Palavecino’s phonics-based story series, *‘Emo-Pron’ Stories*, aimed at enhancing young EFL learners' phonemic awareness and pronunciation skills. *Heather and the Sound Cavern* and *The Elves' Magic Moves* integrate phonetic instruction with engaging storytelling, making them valuable resources for educators and students alike. Both books align with contemporary phonics methodologies and emphasize the oral-aural approach, reinforcing sound recognition and production through repetition, contextualized learning, and interactive activities. Additionally, supplementary online resources extend learning beyond the classroom.

Summary of the content

Heather and the Sound Cavern follows a young protagonist who explores the 'Sound Cavern,' encountering different phonemes and pronunciation challenges. The book introduces specific phonemes per chapter, blending explicit phonetic instruction with storytelling. It includes exercises that target pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, helping learners develop phonemic awareness in an engaging manner.

The Elves' Magic Moves features a group of elves on a magical journey where they discover sounds and phonetic patterns through an adventure-driven storyline. The book emphasizes consonant blends, vowel sounds, and rhythmic speech patterns. A significant advantage of both books is the dedicated website, which provides lesson plans, games, and pronunciation audio resources, enriching classroom instruction and self-study.

Strengths and contributions

- Engaging and contextualized learning. Both books use a story-driven format to make pronunciation practice meaningful and interactive, setting them apart from traditional drill-based methods (Ramírez-Verdugo, 2024).
- Comprehensive phonics instruction. The series systematically introduces key phonemes, reinforcing segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, and intonation) pronunciation features (Ramírez-Verdugo, 2021).
- Multisensory and Interactive Approach. Illustrations, listening tasks, movement-based activities, and repetition enhance kinesthetic learning, making the content accessible to diverse learners.
- Teacher-friendly structure. Both books include clear pronunciation guides and phonetic transcriptions, supporting teachers who may lack extensive phonetics training. The structure of lessons ensures ease of classroom implementation.
- Digital supplementary materials. The dedicated '*Emo-Pron*' [online platform](#) provides structured lesson plans, interactive phonics exercises, and pronunciation audio files, offering additional support to educators and learners.

Areas for improvement

- Limited attention to suprasegmental features. While stress and rhythm are incorporated, a stronger focus on intonation contours and connected speech would enhance communicative fluency.
- Need for differentiated instruction. Both books primarily target beginner-level learners. Including differentiated activities for various proficiency levels would increase their applicability.
- Enhanced digital resource integration. Although *The Elves' Magic Moves* offers online materials, embedding QR codes within the books for instant digital access would improve usability and engagement.
- Additional teacher training resources. Providing a teacher's manual or online workshops could further assist educators in implementing effective phonics-based pronunciation instruction.

Conclusion and recommendation

Heather and the Sound Cavern and *The Elves' Magic Moves* from the 'Emo-pron' series present innovative, pedagogically sound approaches to phonics-based pronunciation instruction. The storytelling format, phonics integration, and interactive design make these books highly valuable for EFL classrooms.

The supplementary digital resources significantly enhance instructional effectiveness, though further intonation training, differentiation, and expanded digital tools could strengthen the series' impact. These books are highly recommended for educators seeking engaging, story-driven phonetic instruction materials that foster young learners' pronunciation development.

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