

INTRODUCTION

Digital Evolution: Contextualizing a Volume on Digital Education in Interpreter Education

THE CONCEPT of digital education (DE) has many definitions and essentially includes the use of electronic media and information and communication technologies (ICT) in education. Digital education is also alternatively referred to as e-learning, multimedia learning, technology-enhanced learning (TEL), computer-based instruction (CBI), computer-managed instruction, computer-based training (CBT), computer-assisted (or -aided) instruction (CAI), Internet-based training (IBT), Web-based training (WBT), online education, virtual education, and virtual learning environments (VLE) (*Wikipedia*, 2014). These alternative names emphasize a particular aspect, component, or delivery method that uses some form of technology in educational settings. Moreover, DE includes numerous types of media that deliver text, audio, images, animation, and streaming video and includes technology applications and processes such as audio or video tape, satellite TV, CD-ROM, and computer-based learning, as well as Web-based learning (*Wikipedia*, 2014). Digital education can be applied in or out of the classroom and can involve self-paced, asynchronous learning or instructor-led, synchronous learning. In addition, DE is suited to distance learning and flexible learning and can also be used in conjunction with face-to-face teaching, in which case the term *blended learning* is commonly used (*Wikipedia*, 2014). *Flipped pedagogy* is a newer term that extends the

notion of blended learning; it indicates educators' utilization of Web tools and the expansion of the learning environment into the digital world (Keengwe, Onchwari, & Oigara, 2014).

Other volumes in the Gallaudet University Interpreter Education series have described the use of technology in interpreter education, for example, in relation to blended delivery using online resources (Napier, 2006), the development of video resources (Bowen-Bailey, 2006); the use of virtual learning environments for distance learning (De Quadros & Stumpf, 2009), and the design of online education for healthcare interpreter education (Bowen-Bailey, 2012). As the eighth volume in this series, *Interpreter Education in the Digital Age* is an international collection of innovative research on approaches to signed and spoken language interpreter education in the digital age. This volume focuses on the technology itself rather than on how technology enhances curriculum, delivery, or resources. As noted earlier, definitions of the concept of DE vary. Therefore the lexicon that we, as interpreter educators and practitioners, share surrounding this concept is as diverse as our experiences with technology. Our goal for this volume is to provide a context for the application of technologies to interpreter education and to learning more broadly, which will bridge the gap between how we define our experiences of DE in interpreter education and how we talk about and practice it. This volume explores the potential impact of these digital experiences on our work as interpreting and language professionals.

OUR HISTORY OF CHANGE

Historically, the concept of DE has often been connected with and sometimes limited to discussions surrounding online education. Although online education is an important topic, this volume examines it more closely by means of a diverse collection of snapshots that focus on technology and interpreter education (not limited to online education) and add to the larger mosaic of digital experiences throughout our profession. To understand our present and our future, we must first reflect on our journey up to this point; then we may better understand where we are headed while continuing to

adapt to the ever-changing landscape of digital education in interpreter education.

Until the first decade of the twenty-first century, as in other disciplines, bodies of research and literature on the connection between technology and interpreter education were sparse. However we have witnessed a surge due to the significant proliferation of technology in our field and the increased accessibility for various levels of users. Interpreter educators, like many other professionals, are host to our own field's pioneers and their discovery of technology integration into educational curricula. As with any movement, natural leaders (technology adopters) in the digital revolution have emerged. They have brought the discussion of technology-based curricula center stage, sparking greater discussion among practitioners, educators, and researchers about what technology really means to interpreter education (see Bowen-Bailey, this volume). Although these leaders have helped to highlight how we may envision the place of interpreter education in the digital world, the following question still remains: what does digital education in interpreter education look like from an international viewpoint and across various languages and modalities?

One particular feature of this volume is that we pay close attention to the way in which we may be able to develop our sense of our digital self and of digital citizenship as models for our students. General citizenship refers to the "set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups" (Turner, 1993, p. 2); moreover, the concept of citizenship is negotiated and renegotiated by social participants (Hoffman, 2004). So what is digital citizenship? We could argue that digital citizenship embraces a similar set of practices that define people as competent users of digital technology; furthermore, the embedding of technology in their lives affects their relationships and contributions to society. In fact, digital citizenship has been defined (Ribble, 2014) as "the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior with regard to technology use." Ribble delineates nine themes required to ensure effective digital citizenship: (1) digital access for full electronic participation in society;

(2) digital commerce to enable electronic buying and selling of goods; (3) digital communication for the electronic exchange of information; (4) digital literacy as a process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology; (5) digital etiquette for electronic standards of conduct or procedure; (6) digital law to enshrine electronic responsibility for actions and deeds; (7) digital rights and responsibilities to ensure that those freedoms are extended to everyone in a digital world; (8) digital health and wellness for physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world; and (9) digital security with electronic precautions to guarantee safety.

Just as our daily, in-person interactions require a degree of civility, so should we exhibit that same civility in our digital practice and lives. This volume contains work that reveals not only the impact of technology on education but also work that raises real questions about what it means to think like, be, and work as an interpreting professional in the digital world. Additionally, this volume provides a glimpse into ways in which we may influence students and improve our critical thinking with regard to what it means to be a digital citizen in this ever-changing digital world. How will our students engage with this new environment in the decades to come if we have not accepted our responsibility as guides in the digital world? By modeling, experimenting, and even taking risks, as the contributing authors have demonstrated, we as a collective will play a small, yet important, role in the future of digital citizenship in interpreter education.

Our hope is that this volume will inspire introspection among interpreter educators globally so that we may view technology in a positive light and appreciate (and embrace) its advantages. By mapping our growth as a profession with regard to technology, we may be able to see more clearly where we are headed and what our role in that journey may be. The contributing authors in this volume provide a glimpse into the conception, preparation, development, processes, and actions necessary to undertake such important changes. The innovative nature of the authors' contributions demonstrates how each of us may find our own niche in the vast digital world and make it our

own. Through trial and tribulation, the digital initiatives highlighted in this volume pave a path to further experimentation, research, and discovery to enhance the already rich interpreting profession.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INNOVATION, CHANGE, AND COMMUNITY

The volume outlines the future of DE in interpreter education with regard to innovation, change, and community. By initially taking stock of the ways in which we are affected by technology—not just in terms of logging onto a computer—we are better equipped to adapt to the changes wrought by the advent of DE in interpreter education. By means of a thoughtful consideration of innovation, change, and community, this volume ignites discussion of the many ways in which we, as interpreting professionals, operate in the digital world on a global level. The contributors come from around the world and from institutions and programs for spoken and signed language interpreter education. Thus they initiate a healthy cross-linguistic and cross-modal dialogue on the exploration of DE in interpreter education. They share their insights into how technology can be innovatively applied to interpreter education, how they themselves have enacted changes in the way that interpreter education is delivered by embracing technology, and how they have engaged with various communities of students through technology.

In terms of innovation, the contributors to the volume discuss mobile technology as a key to learning in Australia and the United States (Napier & Ehrlich), digital innovation through communities of practice in New Zealand (Sachtleben & Crezee), the use of avatars and virtual worlds in interpreter education (Braun, Slater, & Botfield), and the application of gamification principles in interpreter education (Lightfoot). The next theme, “change,” sees authors discuss the use of a community-of-inquiry framework in the online training of interpreters in Australia (Mulayim & Lai), trends in the utilization of digital pen technology in Australia (Orlando), and the creation of “digital learning objects” in Ireland and Belgium (Leeson, Sheikh, & Vermeerbergen). The “community

engagement” theme illustrates how contributors have developed digital resources for the professional development of interpreters in Finland (Lakner & Turner), co-constructed online community learning for interpreting students in the United States (Smith), applied the theoretical principles of “Deaf gain” (Bauman & Murray, 2009) in e-learning for interpreter education in Brazil (de Quadros & Stumpf), and compared interpreting students’ experiences with community engagement online (Darden, Ott, Trine, & Hewlett). Finally, the concluding article gives an overview of how interpreter educators can learn from approaches to “community organizing” to enhance DE in interpreter education (Bowen-Bailey).

Technology-infused interpreter education has the potential to leap from a static, text-based communication stream to a dynamic, even fluid digital world that could revolutionize our experiences. The technologies and strategies highlighted in this volume, from community inquiry to virtual simulations, reveal that no boundaries exist. The digital world has provided an interpreter education environment capable of great change through a newly created identity.

Our day-to-day interactions will no longer be separate from our digital lives; instead, we are witnessing the collision of two worlds from which we can gain great insight into how both influence our work. All facets of our lives—day-to-day or digital—are now multi-dimensional, posing great challenges and creating even greater solutions. Where will you be in the midst of this transformation?

FROM FAD TO FORESIGHT

We can no longer afford to consider the digital world a fad. If we choose to ignore the potential and the innovations that will enable us to shape a new world for interpreter education, we will only complicate our own future and that of the next generation of professionals. Instead, by embracing this digital revolution we can leave our fear behind and welcome the future of interpreter education in the digital age.

We also acknowledge that, with the constant advances in technology, what is discussed in this volume will change, and future publications

will likely reveal different innovative research and practices in interpreter education. We also recognize that, over time, the work presented here may become irrelevant or even obsolete because of these anticipated rapid changes. The themes we identify—innovation, change, and community engagement—only scratch the surface of what is to come. The potential that digital education holds for interpreter education may well bring about a time of great transformation.

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