# Introduction

In recent decades, globalization, the advancement of information and communication technologies (ICT), the lockdown for COVID-19 which took place in 2020, and international socioeconomic trends have brought about challenges to education worldwide. Many of those challenges have resulted in major issues and debates related to the most effective way to prepare students to deal with the new demands of the labour market, and to how the prevalence and evolution of ICT in all realms of life should be reflected in education. The teaching of second and foreign languages has also experienced the new demands technology and its effects on languages and environments have generated, and also the challenges associated to a global labour market where the knowledge of languages has become a need, but the concept of communicative competence has expanded to include many new knowledges such as multimodality, multimediality or interculturality. Contemporary human communication is characterized by its multimedia and multimodal complexity, enhanced by the use of ICT, and especially digital media.

Based on the XXI Conference of the Spanish Society of Teaching and Learning Languages and Literature (SEDLL), this special issue aims to show research on ways to try to accommodate and respond to some of the challenges that teaching foreign languages in this new era entails. The volume includes 11 articles dealing with new teaching approaches, and covering both proposals and experimental studies of teaching second and foreign languages, which integrate multimodality or interculturality and their intersection, CLIL, and ways to use new learning environments including mobile-assisted language learning or telecollaboration and virtual exchanges together with assessment practices which take into account the complexity of contemporary communicative competence.

The two theoretical papers included in the issue deal with two very different topics but both related to new learning environments and how they exert an effect on both learning and teaching foreign languages and their assessment. Pascual Pérez-Paredes and Danyang Zhang explore the evolution of MALL and illustrate how both CALL first and MALL later have been dominated by a focus on technology over pedagogy and mainly limited to instructed language learning contexts, in what they call restricted MALL. They argue for the need to transcend this view to include the socially situated context of students and the social dimension of learning outside the classroom in what they term socially contextualized MALL. Jesús García Laborda, Miguel Fernández Álvarez and Teresa Magal Royo's paper argues that language assessment has failed to incorporate and reflect all the changes language learning has gone through in the last decades, mainly due to the prevalence and inclusion of ICT in all realms of life and the new methodologies to teach languages such as CLIL. In an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of language assessments exposed in their paper, the authors make a proposal on what aspects should be incorporated into the University Entrance exam in Spain, and exemplify how to do it.

Mª Paz Azparren and Izaskun Villarreal and Mª Camino Bueno-Alastuey deal with bilingual education (CLIL) and how this new learning environment to teach both content and language can become a challenge for teachers. The first author analyses the effect a CLIL teacher education programme had on the beliefs of in-service secondary CLIL teachers. She concludes that proper training can positively impact content teachers' pedagogical CLIL

practices and their enthusiasm about CLIL, as well as their beliefs regarding the necessary integration of language into their teaching. However, the course showed no impact on teachers' (lack of) knowledge and command of English and/or the stressful factors associated to them. Izaskun Villarreal and Mª Camino Bueno-Alastuey report on the results of a project, Forging Links - carried out with pre-service teachers who attend university CLIL and instructional technology courses -which examines their CLIL skills and technopedagogical integration in CLIL materials. Their results indicate future teachers became aware of the stages needed to develop CLIL appropriately, were able to integrate ICT into teaching materials effectively and those abilities increased their motivation and supported better learning outcomes. Nevertheless, a lack of awareness of the importance of including more language scaffolding into the materials was also observed.

In the only proposal in this special issue, María Bobadilla-Pérez and Ramón Jesús Carballo showcase the versatility of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) as a tool to exploit multimodality and as a useful resource in the language classroom. Breaking down different AVT modes such as subtitling, dubbing, subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing, audio descriptions and creative AVT and focusing on the benefits and shortcomings of each mode, the authors present four learning sequences as potential applications in the foreign language secondary classroom.

Two studies analyse innovative teaching practices, a telecollaboration or virtual exchange project and the *Elevator Pitch* technique used in a task-based learning context. Gladys Villegas Paredes, Silvia Canto e Inmaculada Rodriguez Moranta present the perceived improvements in intercultural communicative competence (ICC) after a telecollaboration or virtual exchange project in higher education of both learners of Spanish as a foreign language (SFL) and teacher trainees. Results suggest that, after the telecollaboration, SFL learners showed favorable opinions about their intercultural competence when interacting with native speakers of the target language and that trainee teachers perceived improvements in their cultural knowledge, intercultural skills and attitudes.

Maria Luisa Aznar Juan analyses a task-based project using the *Elevator Pitch* (EP) technique in SFL with B2 level university students. The study shows a positive shift in students' motivation, as well as a link between the curriculum and the real-world. She discovered that the use of EP allowed for a more structured, thoughtful and comprehensive content and skills acquisition, organization and synthesis of thought processes as well as the development of individual abilities in heterogeneous and dynamic environments.

Multimodality is dealt with in the following two papers. Alejandra Montero-SaizAja investigated multimodality effects on the productive vocabulary of EFL learners, who were divided into two groups, a multimodal group with preference for two or three perceptual learning styles and a unimodal group with preference for a unique perceptual learning style. The findings indicated that multimodal learners had more productive vocabulary than their unimodal peers. The difference was not statistically significant, but both the effect size and the strength of association were large. Therefore, the results suggested that EFL learners employed different sensory modalities to learn vocabulary.

Maria Luisa Carrió Pastor puts forward a proposal to teach multimodal metadiscourse in academic writing in English as a foreign language context based on her analysis of the components of multimodal metadiscourse in a corpus of sixty-four academic papers on engineering written by native English speakers. Using the multimodal elements identified,

exercises and tasks, which were used to teach an experimental group, and to test them and a control group after the treatment were created. Results showed that the experimental group obtained a higher number of correct multimodal metadiscourse, but more training was deemed necessary due to the low number of such correct tasks in both groups.

Two articles explore study abroad (SA) experiences. Iranzu Peña Pascual explores university students' perceptions regarding the creation of a digital story about their SA experience, based on intercultural and/or target language learning discovery narratives. Her results indicate that although motivation was the main initial emotion, inexperience with video editing tools generated an attitude of stress that interfered with the perception of digital storytelling as an opportunity for learning. The students reported learning included gains related to (a) linguistic-communicative improvements, both in oral and written expression, (b) social and (c) biographical and identity sense-making aspects.

On the other hand, Yerko Sepúveda, Maya Edwards, Raychel Vasseur and Idoia Elola explore SA students' perceptions on identity construction through the incorporation of multiliteracies and multimodal texts (digital stories), in a second-year foundational Spanish course and an Advanced Spanish Grammar course. Analyses of surveys, digital stories (DS), and final artefacts were grounded in Rogers' notion of self-concept and Activity Theory. Results suggested that the digital and multimodal nature of DS creation facilitated greater opportunities for students to document their self-perceived gains in identity.

Finally, a book review on children's literature, dialogical reading and the training of educators from research has been included.

Summing up, this special issue covers a wide variety of aspects which represent some of the challenges teaching languages face in this last decade, especially in these last few years full of radical changes. The volume shows positive and innovative proposals to try to expand and provide new approaches and teaching practices, which can enrich exposure to multimodal content, promote new ways of working collaboratively, and facilitate learning outside the context of the classroom and communication without limits of space and time. This special issue might contribute to opening new avenues for research on the teaching of second and foreign languages by including new perspectives and technologies with the aim of responding more adequately to a new language, which is mediated both by technology and by the advances society has gone through.

The guest editors.

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