

Temas de hoy en didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras

Estela Klett

Edited by Editores Asociados, Buenos Aires, 2021

182 p.; 21 x 15

ISBN 978-987-4150-45-5

Online edition available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mk382zr9>

Estela Klett Ph.D., former Director of the Department of Foreign Languages (1988-2019) at Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina), has extensive experience as a teacher and researcher of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) and Foreign Language Didactics. In *Temas de hoy en didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras* she discusses a wide array of relevant topics in the field, ranging from a critical analysis of the latest trends in FL teaching and learning to current issues in local language policies.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section, *En el aula*, comprises four articles. In the first one, Klett challenges long-standing dichotomies particularly rooted in ELT studies, such as learning - acquisition and intentional - incidental learning, in favor of a more complex view of FL learning as a continuum affected by seamless multidimensional practices that learners develop in the current socio-technical scenario. The second article provides a critical analysis of the tenets and characteristics of the flipped classroom and discusses its relevance and suitability at different stages of the FL learning process. In the third article, the author shares a case study that explores the representations of different languages in plurilingual children living in Argentina and Brazil based on social and affective factors that foster metalinguistic reflections. Klett emphasises that this type of ethnographic approach, carried out through drawings, interviews and linguistic biographies, provides a broader view of situated linguistic perspectives beyond the specific didactics of the different foreign languages. The last article, in turn, revisits and analyses the evolution of contrastive linguistics. While the traditional structuralist analysis, mostly limited to the syntactic and phonological systems, tended to view L1 interference under a negative light, new contrastive approaches, which incorporate the lexical and cultural dimensions, vindicate the importance of L1 in the FL classroom as an opportunity to engage in metalinguistic and intercultural reflection.

The second section of the book delves into some of the intricacies of reading comprehension in a foreign language grounded on the belief that competence in reading invests learners with greater autonomy in their learning process. The first article in this section concentrates on the need to combine both intentional and incidental learning strategies when reading in a foreign language. Bronckart's socio-discursive interactionist perspective (1997) is adopted as the framework for the reading activities that involve analysis, reflection, deconstruction, and (co)construction of the texts - i.e. teacher-guided activities that require the purposeful investment of attention and memory on the part of the learners. Simultaneously, activities such as surveys and questionnaires that engage learners in introspection and retrospective thinking about their reading histories and traditions are recommended when it comes to fostering incidental learning. Throughout the article, the author emphasizes the integrated nature of intentional and incidental learning, and highlights the need to revisit reading experiences so that they can actually become learning experiences, following Descartes, Morin (1959), and Dehaene (2019). The other article in this section is an account of the author and colleagues' methodological decisions when planning and implementing reading comprehension courses at Universidad de Buenos Aires. Based on the socio-discursive interactionist tradition, the author places great emphasis on the



identification of the genres pertaining to university life and professional development and the aspects to be addressed when analysing the texts following a genre approach; she also describes the contrastive analysis procedures instructors and students engage in when comparing the textual realizations of a given genre in both French and Spanish. Likewise, Klett presents a relatively new addition to the courses in question: a focus on listening comprehension through a multimodal approach in an attempt to respond to the exigencies of the internationalization of university education.

The last section, in turn, discusses current issues in language policies in the educational system. The author starts by analysing the use of the term *additional languages* in the official curriculum of the city of Buenos Aires to refer not only to foreign languages but also to indigenous, sign or heritage languages. Is this umbrella term an innocent lexical choice? Klett goes beyond semantics to examine its philosophical, psychological and social implications. The origin of the term can be traced mainly to the British context where EAL (English as an Additional Language) is used instead of ESL (English as a Second Language) i.e. taught to non native speakers living in the target-language community. Among other factors, the author points to the connotation of “additional” and the loss of identity of each FL under this term which understates their historical relevance and educational value in our educational context.

The last article in this book focuses on the concept of plurilingualism, the shifting attitudes towards plurilingual individuals and plurilingual practices in the school context and the broader community –from rejection and prohibition to acceptance and recognition–, and the contemporary definitions of the plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Thus, following the CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), the author highlights the partial character of the plurilingual individual’s knowledge of each language as well as the integrative quality of the plurilingual competence; the former can be conceived as a reaction against the belief that all learners should achieve native-like competence in the foreign language. The last section in this article comprises a set of didactic recommendations to foster a plurilingual perspective in the classroom, such as writing and sharing language biographies, depicting the linguistic landscape in one’s surroundings, and watching films that portray plurilingual encounters, among others.

In *Temas de hoy en didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras* Klett once again manages to assemble different but interrelated topics and experiences pertaining to the field of foreign language teaching in Argentina and presents them in a way that prioritizes clarity and brevity and yet captures the complex individual and socio-historic dimensions of each of them. The fact that Klett’s academic background originates in the teaching of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) makes this a particularly enriching publication for ELT practitioners since it provides wider epistemological perspectives that raise awareness of the specific complexities and opportunities of FL teaching and learning in our context.

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