Foreword

Philip Hubbard¹

We live in an era of constant change. Sometimes that change is moderate and steady, such as the growth of social media, online video, and smartphone apps over the past decade or so. At other times, the change is swift and dramatic, as we saw when much of the world suddenly had to shift from predominantly classroom teaching and learning, to predominantly online with the onset of COVID-19. This constant change is true of all fields, and language teaching is no exception. In order to keep up with this change, language teachers need to stay current with (1) developments in second language acquisition theory, research, and pedagogy, and (2) relevant technologies and applications for language learning both inside and outside the classroom. For language teacher educators, knowing how to stay up-to-date is even more important as they are responsible for preparing teacher candidates for a lifetime of teaching in an evolving and unpredictable future.

Language centers have an important role to play in achieving the aforementioned goals, supporting both teachers and teacher educators. They are often associated with specific institutions and thus draw on the teaching staff and students of their constituent foreign language programs or departments. In the US, where I come from, language centers can be independent units within a university or attached to a larger department, focused mainly on the needs of students at their institutions. However, there are also 16 national foreign language resource centers at universities around the country² that have an expanded role to provide materials and training beyond their institutional borders, each dedicated to a specific domain. For example, the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research at Pennsylvania State University focuses on research and resources

¹. Stanford University Language Center, Stanford, California, United States; phubbard@stanford.edu
². https://www.nflrc.org/

for developing language competence at the advanced level across all languages, while the National African Language Resource Center at the University of Indiana concentrates on the teaching and learning of African languages.

Despite the proliferation of language centers around the world, as the editors of the present work note, few publications specifically focus on the research produced by the faculty at a single language center. At one level, this absence is understandable – university hiring, promotion, and tenure committees tend to reward researchers whose work appears in highly-ranked peer-reviewed journals or in edited volumes from prestigious academic publishers. However, the present work demonstrates the potential of an alternative path, one that celebrates a collection of research papers from a single institution and supports its broad distribution to an audience of fellow practitioners.

The volume that follows represents the work of a group at the language center of one institution: the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), collaboratively edited by three of its members. In doing so, it naturally provides an important resource for those who teach there and may be unaware of what their colleagues have discovered. However, by bringing this work to the level of a professional publication for wider distribution, the editors have also allowed those outside CUT the chance to learn from the research results of these chapter authors.

The editors’ introduction does an excellent job of summarizing the content of the individual chapters and outlining common themes, and I do not intend to duplicate that here. Rather, I would like to say a few words about the language center from which these works sprang and then comment on several themes they mention.

According to its website, the CUT Language Center was founded in 2007 and focuses on three areas: language learning for specific purposes, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), and teacher training in teaching Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). The vision statement for the language center contains ten points: I believe three are particularly relevant here.

• To continuously develop as an internationally recognized Language Center with emphasis on innovation and linguistic diversity. Innovation is the key word in this statement, and for innovation to be credible, it must be supported by empirical research demonstrating its effectiveness. The center is not just a consumer of research but a producer.

• To offer knowledge and linguistic competence within the academic community. The focus on offering knowledge to the academic community again is dependent on a strong and consistent research program, properly supported by the administration. Additionally, the production of works such as the present book allows for free dissemination of the center’s contributions to colleagues.

• To deliver the best possible culturally based second language education and training supported by the use of new technologies in order to foster high overall academic achievement in the choice of tertiary education options. The commitment of the center to new technologies is reflected not only in many of the chapters in the present volume but also in its offering of a comprehensive online master’s program in CALL linked to the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) technology standards.

It is relatively easy to come up with a set of vision statements like these, but the CUT Language Center turns these words into actions. There are indeed a number of faculty involved in research activities such as those underlying the chapters that follow, adding to the knowledge base of the field. The book is an admirable example of how useful research so often emerges from practice rather than being driven top-down by abstract theory. Thus, there is a pragmatism here that is missing from much of applied linguistics research, and I believe this makes the contributions more likely to impact teaching both inside and outside of CUT.

In their introduction, the editors note several themes, two of which are the teaching and learning of LSP and the role of new technologies. Readers
interested in the former will find half of the papers concerned with that area. Of greater general interest, though, seven of the eight papers involve some form of technology mediation in the language learning process. The forms of this vary. In one course, the potential of CALL technologies in mediation processes is noted. In another, the use of assistive technologies to support students’ memorization, concentration, and spelling is explored. Other papers illustrate the integration and impact of technology in developing critical thinking with multimodal texts, collaborative writing, online teacher education, virtual exchange, and embodied learning. The book thus offers a wealth of information regarding the affordances of various technologies for a range of applications in language learning and teacher training.

As mentioned previously, this book is special for its emerging solely from work within the CUT Language Center. However, it is worth noting that the three editors recently collaborated on two volumes related to teacher education. One was in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP): Papadima-Sophocleous, Kakoulli Constantinou, and Giannikas (2019), ESP teaching and teacher education: current theories and practices. The other, focused on technology, was with the Teacher Education Special Interest Group of EUROCALL: Giannikas, Kakoulli Constantinou, and Papadima-Sophocleous (2019), Professional development in CALL: a selection of papers. I encourage readers interested in teacher education to have a look at these works as well.

In addition to the three editors and the chapter authors, I would like to acknowledge the peer reviewers who gave freely of their time to providing the authors with valuable feedback: Fernando Loizides, Cardiff University; Elena Kkese, Cyprus University of Technology; Simone Torsani, Università degli Studi di Genova; Georgios Neokleous, Norwegian University of Science and Technology; David Barr, Ulster University; John Gillespie, Ulster University; Dimitra Karoulla-Vrikki, European University Cyprus; Stavroula Tsiplakou, Open University of Cyprus; Evangelia (Liana) Sakelliou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; Susanna Nocchi, Technological University Dublin; and Elisavet Kiourti, University of Nicosia and European University of Cyprus.
In closing, because of the rapidity with which technologies that mediate language learning and language use arise, it is more important than ever for language centers everywhere to become more involved not only in developing and maintaining the professional competence of their own teachers, but in sharing what they learn from the research in their particular contexts. I encourage readers to explore the chapters in the present volume to discover information of value for their own program administration, research, and teaching. Even more, I hope that *Tertiary education language learning: a collection of research* inspires faculty at other language centers to travel the same path, first producing useful research of their own and then disseminating it to interested colleagues around the world.

**References**

