

## **Book Review: Fei Victor Lim and Mercedes Querol-Julián (Eds.) (2024), *Designing learning with digital technologies*. Routledge.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**EN** *Designing Learning with Digital Technologies*, edited by Fei Victor Lim and Mercedes Querol-Julián (2024), is an insightful contribution to the ever-evolving conversation about how digital tools shape and influence teaching and learning practices. Grounded in multimodal and socio-semiotic theory, the volume centers the role of educators and teachers as empowered designers of learning. With a specific focus on post-pandemic teaching realities, yet not limited by them, it offers empirical studies, theoretical insights, and practical tools to support innovative, inclusive, and sustainable digital pedagogy across a range of educational and cultural contexts.

**Key words:** DIGITAL PEDAGOGY, MULTIMODALITY, BLENDED LEARNING, LEARNING DESIGN

**ES** *Diseñando el Aprendizaje con Tecnologías Digitales*, editado por Fei Victor Lim y Mercedes Querol-Julián (2024), es una contribución perspicaz al debate en constante evolución sobre cómo las herramientas digitales moldean e influyen en las prácticas de enseñanza y aprendizaje. Basado en la teoría multimodal y socio-semiótica, el volumen se centra en el papel de educadores y docentes como diseñadores empoderados del aprendizaje. A partir de un enfoque específico en las realidades docentes pospandémicas, pero sin limitarse a ellas, ofrece estudios empíricos, perspectivas teóricas y herramientas prácticas para apoyar una pedagogía digital innovadora, inclusiva y sostenible en diversos contextos educativos y culturales.

**Palabras clave:** PEDAGOGÍA DIGITAL, MULTIMODALIDAD, APRENDIZAJE COMBINADO, DISEÑO DE APRENDIZAJE

**IT** *Progettare l'Apprendimento con Tecnologie Digitali*, a cura di Fei Victor Lim e Mercedes Querol-Julián (2024), è un contributo approfondito al discorso, in continua evoluzione, su come gli strumenti digitali possano plasmare e influenzare le pratiche di insegnamento e apprendimento. Basato sulla teoria multimodale e socio-semiotica, il volume pone al centro il ruolo degli educatori e degli insegnanti come coloro incaricati della progettazione dell'apprendimento. Con un accento posto sulle realtà di insegnamento post-pandemiche, anche se non limitato a questo, il volume offre studi empirici, panoramiche teoriche e strumenti pratici al fine di supportare una pedagogia digitale che possa essere innovativa, inclusiva e sostenibile, orizzontale ad una serie di contesti educativi e culturali.

**Parole chiave:** PEDAGOGIA DIGITALE, MULTIMODALITÀ, APPRENDIMENTO MISTO, PROGETTAZIONE DELL'APPRENDIMENTO

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*Designing Learning with Digital Technologies* explores how educators can create meaningful, effective, and relevant learning experiences using a wide range of digital tools and resources in a post-pandemic world. It offers a multimodal perspective on how digital technologies are reshaping teaching and learning practices, particularly in response to the now-structural need for blended learning (Peters et al., 2020; Lim & Toh, 2020). Central to this approach is the repositioning of teachers as designers of learning (Kress & Selander, 2012; Selander, 2008;), moving beyond traditional views of educators as mere transmitters of knowledge.

Edited by Fei Victor Lim and Mercedes Querol-Julián, the volume brings together a diverse group of scholars working in multimodality, digital literacies, and across different teaching levels. Their contributions span current research areas such as genre analysis, embodied teaching, and multiliteracies, offering insights into how digital technologies influence the production and transmission of knowledge in educational contexts.

By highlighting the educational potential of digital media, the volume draws on the multiliteracies framework and contributes to the growing field of multimodal studies in education. Therefore, it will be of interest to researchers and educators focusing on digital learning and multimodal literacies. Similarly, readers will find both theoretical insights and practical applications across varied educational and cultural contexts.

The book is structured into five main parts, each exploring key areas in the design of learning with digital technologies. Part I, *Designing learning*, introduces the book's theoretical foundations and presents the teachers' role as a central designer of learning. Parts II to V develop this perspective through specific thematic focuses: *Digital learning designs*, *Digital learning with embodied teaching*, *Digital learning interactions*, and *Digital multimodal literacies*. More specifically, the volume opens with a chapter by Lim and Querol-Julián that maps the central themes and contributions, making the case for rethinking the teacher's role as a designer of learning.

Subsequently, Chapter 2 by Selander explores the theoretical foundations of the designs for learning perspective, addressing questions of knowledge, recognition, and identity in digitised education. He argues that, as media shape meaning-making, learning design choices are essential for fostering inclusive and future-oriented teaching practices. In Chapter 3, Lumsden, Djonov, and Slatyer introduce the Multimodal Community of Inquiry, a framework combining a multimodal social semiotic approach with the Community of Inquiry model, and applied to TESOL teacher education courses to illustrate how platform affordances and instructors' pedagogical values influence the design of online learning environments. Chapter 4, by Rennie and Smyth, examines the design of heutagogical learning experiences in online higher education. Drawing on case studies from their own teaching, the authors propose strategies to support learner autonomy, self-determination, and capability development through flexible digital design. Their approach mainly emphasises student-led exploration and the effective use of digital resources to foster self-directed learning. Concluding the second part of the volume, Chapter 5 authored by Komninou introduces a set of tools for monitoring the metasemiotic awareness of learners towards multimodal texts, to be used to assess the development of multiliteracies and, ultimately, to inform pedagogical design and support improvements in teaching practices.

The third part begins with Chapter 6, where Sindoni explores the teacher's gaze as a semiotic resource in video-mediated educational settings. In particular, through an analysis of user-generated content on different social media platforms, Sindoni investigates its implications for teacher training in digital contexts. Chapter 7, by Bao and Feng, examine the multimodal design of award-winning English language teaching micro-lectures where they identified patterns in teachers' use of camera angles, background music, and visual settings. In Chapter 8, Crawford Camiciottoli analyses OpenCourseWare videos to explore the role of gesture and prosody in teaching phrasal verbs through the use of corpus and multimodal annotation tools to illustrate how embodied communication can enhance language comprehension with significant practical implications for language teaching.

The fourth section opens with Chapter 9, where Santamaría-Urbieta examines the use of asynchronous video tools in foreign language learning, focusing on the platform Flip to show how digital interactions can foster student engagement and promote informal learning communities. In Chapter 10, Carciu and Muresan present a cross-national multimodal learning exchange aimed at developing communication competencies in English. The aim is to integrate digital collaboration into language education. Chapter 11, co-authored by Koh, Lim, and Jonathan, focuses on WiREAD+, a platform for supporting collaborative critical reading. As the authors explain, the platform's theoretical foundation and its analytics features can support the tracking of student interaction and foster their deeper engagement with texts.

The final portion of the volume, beginning at Chapter 12 by Beltrán-Palanques, explores online video game reviews as a pedagogical tool for ESP by analyzing their multimodal features and evaluating their role in developing students' critical thinking and multimodal literacy. Chapter 13, by Karatza and Lim, discusses the

creation of a pedagogic metalanguage for primary students engaging with websites. The chapter outlines turning research findings into practical classroom applications from research to practice and highlights teachers' roles in adapting metalanguage resources to specific classroom contexts. Gilje, closes the volume with Chapter 14, by examining students' digital multimodal compositions in Norwegian secondary schools. Using video data and student outputs, he analyses how learners negotiate meaning through semiotic choices, while emphasizing the importance of teacher guidance in fostering multimodal literacy.

The volume builds on the tradition of multimodal and socio-semiotic research in education (O'Halloran et al., 2017; Hafner & Pun, 2020), while advancing the urgent conversation prompted by Kalantzis and Cope (2020) on how the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed fundamental limitations in traditional models of education and accelerated the need for pedagogical change. In particular, the book responds to their call for pedagogies grounded in multimodal design, by contributing to a broader scholarly effort to rethink education in light of the growing importance of digital media in teaching and learning. It also addresses recent calls for the systematic integration of digital multimodal texts in educational practice, building on prior work that has analysed the structures and communicative functions of such texts (e.g., Adami & Jewitt, 2016; Bezemer & Kress, 2017; Zappavigna, 2020). In doing so, the contributors offer empirical evidence in how educators may effectively leverage these digital resources.

Moreover, the volume maintains a clear and consistent empirical orientation, with chapters grounded in diverse and often international contexts and educational settings. This not only grants it a broad scope but also ensures that its insights remain applicable across a wider range of teaching and learning environments. In this regard, the volume's current geographical and institutional representation, while diverse, could serve as a starting point for future expansions that further reflect the truly global impact of the pandemic. In this sense, there is the potential for continued dialogue and broader inclusion in subsequent work.

Ultimately, two aspects stand out. First is the consistently teacher-centric approach. During the pandemic, teachers and educators bore the full responsibility of managing both technology and pedagogy, being expected to adapt rapidly and perform efficiently with minimal preparation. The volume, instead repositions educators as empowered designers of learning, reflecting a clear willingness to move beyond tokenistic or deterministic uses of technology in favour of pedagogy and agency. Second, the volume's engagement with post-pandemic realities is both current and relevant, responding to current teaching demands while offering critical reflections on how digital learning has evolved. Now, a few years on, what was once described as the post-pandemic period increasingly appears not as a temporary phase but as a structural feature of contemporary education. For this reason, *Designing Learning with Digital Technologies* offers timely insights and frameworks that hopefully align with and help shape this ongoing transformation, in support of educators and researchers.

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