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## Book Review

**Using Technology to Design ESL/EFL Microlearning Activities**, by Lucas Kohnke, Springer Nature, 2023, 84pp., US\$52.97, ISBN: 978-981-99-2773-9.



In the new information and technology age, digital devices and software have emerged as practical tools for facilitating language acquisition. While there is a growing body of knowledge on technology-enhanced education (Gallegos, 2022; Kaliraj & Thirupathi, 2022), there is a paucity of books that specifically delve into language teaching with technology. *Using Technology to Design ESL/EFL Microlearning Activities* is a compact volume that addresses this gap, showing how to incorporate technology with microlearning activities for ESL/EFL learners. As a practitioner who taught technology courses for pre-service and in-service English teachers at the Education University of Hong Kong, Lucas Kohnke attached great significance to integrating technology into ESL/EFL lessons in the post-pandemic world. With abundant first-hand experience developing microlearning activities, he believes that microlearning is a powerful option for teachers who want to optimize their students' EFL/ESL learning by utilizing bite-sized chunks of content that are available anytime and anywhere. The book provides practical strategies and user-friendly tools, making it well-suited for both new and experienced language teachers who are keen on enhancing their ESL/EFL instruction with technology-based microlearning activities. While the book aims at

enhancing practice, academic researchers interested in the application of microlearning in language education might also find it informative. It unveils activities and software selections that cultivate English reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, and enhance critical thinking and collaborative learning abilities for tech-savvy ESL/EFL learners.

On the whole, the book presents information in a concise and focused manner that facilitates an easy and enjoyable reading experience. Eight chapters are organized in a way that first establishes the theoretical and technological frameworks (Chapters 1-3), then moves to present practical applications and design considerations



for microlearning in ESL/EFL education (Chapters 4-7), and then concludes with potential drawbacks of microlearning for ESL/EFL learners and directions for future research in the context of microlearning for ESL/EFL education (Chapter 8). Within each well-structured chapter, the author begins with an abstract and keywords, culminating with a succinct conclusion, allowing readers to grasp the essence of the section and harvest clear takeaway points. In addition, each chapter includes an extensive list of references to provide depth and breadth on the subject matter, supporting further exploration into relevant knowledge.

Chapters 1-3 lay the theoretical foundations for the book. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the concept and characteristics of microlearning and its role in ESL/EFL contexts, and it discusses the rationale for the book. Chapter 2 discusses the evolving nature of tech tools in ESL/EFL teaching and their integration into curricula, and it elucidates related learning theories of technology-enhanced language education. Chapter 3 reveals the pedagogical principles of designing microlearning activities specifically for ESL/EFL classrooms, including four key considerations (learner needs, medium, interactivity, simplicity) and a four-stage structure (introduction, interactive content, short exercises, instant feedback). This content offers readers valuable insights into relevant theories, and it provides general guidelines on how to integrate technology and design effective learning activities to enhance language teaching.

Chapters 4-7 focus on the tools, applications, and software, as well as specific activities that can be utilized to bolster ESL/EFL learning. Chapter 4 investigates how mobile device-based microlearning activities can improve ESL/EFL learners' language skills and collaborative learning abilities. For instance, learners can utilize mobile apps like Babbel to engage in peer review activities, which enhance their language skills through interactive exercises, and incorporate questions, tasks, and feedback for active engagement. Chapter 5 illustrates how to use digital mediums like podcasts, videos, infographics, and flashcards to deliver language points in an organized and vivid manner. A case in point is the integration of podcasts into microlearning activities, where ESL/EFL learners can access learning content based on their interests and proficiency levels, engaging with thematic episodes that enhance their listening and comprehension skills. Chapter 6 centers on creating microlearning activities that incorporate virtual and augmented reality, such as guiding ESL/EFL learners in navigating a virtual place and indicating clues for identifying and describing various items, which provides a more immersive and fascinating learning experience for language learners. Chapter 7 introduces chatbots specifically designed for English language learning, which help ESL/EFL learners practice linguistic skills, understand language problems, and receive personalized and immediate feedback. For example, regarding vocabulary building, the book displays how a chatbot can provide daily English words, along with definitions and example sentences, encouraging learners to use them in new sentences for practice and feedback.

Chapter 8 concludes the book by briefly evaluating the limitations of microlearning and offers recommendations for future research and application. The author underlines the importance of addressing microlearning's potential drawbacks to maximize its effect in ESL/EFL instruction. He recommends that language teachers engage in action research to meet possible challenges arising from realistic situations. Seven insightful tips for devising tailor-made mobile microlearning activities for ESL/EFL students wrap up the chapter, highlighting the need for considering individual learner's needs, active participation, and social interaction, which can help educators foster a more dynamic and encouraging atmosphere for learners.

Overall, the book offers an engaging overview of digital microlearning strategies for ESL/EFL instruction, with a strong emphasis on feasibility and usability for teachers and learners. However, there are some noteworthy limitations. First, although the book covers specific tools, applications, and software for microlearning in ESL/EFL education, it does not thoroughly compare and contrast their advantages and disadvantages, which are what language teachers and learners will likely want to know more about. Second, considering that some tools still demand payment and high digital literacy from users, the digital divide could be a hindrance for some learners and institutions. Third, since the book was published in 2023 and education digitalization has been advancing rapidly, newer technical products tailored for ESL/EFL education (e.g., GPT 4.0) have not been included. Despite these limitations, the book provides valuable insights and actionable strategies for educators interested in integrating

technology effectively into ESL/EFL classroom.

### References

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**Lu Minyi**

Shanghai International Studies University  
tcminmin7475@163.com

**Song Yanan**

Shanghai International Studies University  
yanansong@shisu.edu.cn

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