Editorial

The unpredicted outburst and spread of COVID–19 pandemic, as an unprecedented global or globalized public health crisis, has disrupted almost every aspect of human activities, including education. The effects and consequences on the educational system worldwide have been very detrimental. Such an unexpected onset of the pandemic has forced exclusively most of the governments and decision-making authorities worldwide to radically review and reconsider the basic strategies and orientations of the whole educational system, including, of course, language learning and teaching. The partial or total closure of educational institutions worldwide, and the quick and unexpected shift from a conventional, familiar and easy-going classroom teaching mode to an online or blended / hybrid model, has totally affected the whole educational system on all sides.

Within this alarming global situation, a very important and successful International E-Conference, entitled “Distance Language Education” was held on May 27-28, 2021 to discuss the major challenges facing language learning and teaching online and share knowledge, experiments and projects therein. The Conference was co-organized by Cadi Ayyad University (Linguistics and Cultural Diversity Laboratory, Faculty of Arabic Language), Arizona State University (Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College), and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (Language Laboratory). In addition to these renowned institutions, outstanding Moroccan and American keynote speakers and experts, experimented as well as young, passionate researchers and interpreters, added to local and international partners, have all contributed for the Conference to be a big event from the very onset. Nearly forty papers, covering several facets of the topic, have been presented and discussed. Equally important and outstanding is the fact that the proceedings of the Conference were held in four languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The present issue of the Linguistics and Cultural Diversity Journal provides a collection of most of the articles presented during that International E-conference on Distance Language Education, and it covers the following diverse and multi-faceted axes. The contributions were made by a group of renowned, national and international professors and researchers from different linguistic backgrounds. Of course, language, within this framework, refers to both an autonomous subject of learning/teaching – whether it is a first, foreign or second language – or a medium/entity to learn/teach contents and other subjects. In a nutshell, this international e-conference sought to search around the problematic of who teaches what to whom and how within the distance language education framework. The proceedings of the Conference cover four main axes:

1- Distance Language Teaching
   - Distance language education and new teaching roles.
   - Distance language education and new methodological approaches.
   - Teaching language online and ICT opportunities and challenges.
   - Language material selection and instruction design in online class.
   - Language teaching online and digital classroom management.

2- Distance Language Learning
   - Online language learner profile: mindsets, abilities and engagement.
   - Learner-driven distance language learning: autonomy, critical thinking and
creativity.
▪ Technology facilitated distance language learning.
▪ Learner motivation and needs in online language class.
▪ Teacher-learner distance communication strategies.
▪ Equity and equality in distance language education.

3- Distance Language Assessment
▪ Distance language education assessment methodology.
▪ Online language assessment feasibility, implementation and credibility.
▪ Aligning distance language assessment with the instructional strategies.
▪ Distance language assessment and learners’ cultivation.
▪ Innovative technology and online language assessment.

4- Distance Language Research
▪ Mapping trends of distance language education research.
▪ Methodological issues in distance language education research.
▪ Distance language education research development and prospects.
▪ Needs and challenges in distance language education research.
▪ Institutional distance language research.
▪ Empirical research on distance language education.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude and warmest thanks to all the distinguishable keynote speakers, panelists, moderators and curators from Morocco and the United States for their collective efforts and tremendous contributions despite the Pandemic’s constraints and the huge time difference between Morocco and the State of Arizona. Our sincere recognition and thanks are also extended to those young, ambitious, engaging student-researchers and interpreting trainees who actively participated in the simultaneous interpretation of the Conference proceedings. We also owe special thanks, sincere gratitude and utmost recognition for the President of University Cadi Ayyad (UCA), President of Mohamed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), President of Arizona State University, Vice-President of the UCA in charge of Innovation, Research and Cooperation Partnership, Dean of the Faculty of Arabic Language (FLAM), Dean of Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (ASU), and the Director of Linguistics and Cultural Diversity (LRC).

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