

# International Journal of Educational Innovations

ISSN 3078-5677

International Journal of Educational Innovations  
Volume 2, Issue 1, 1-5  
<https://doi.org/10.46451/ije.260101>

Received: 20 December, 2025  
Accepted: 1 January, 2026  
Published: 1 January, 2026

## Editorial

### Special Issue in Honour of Professor Marina Dodigovic: Studies in Vocabulary and Artificial Intelligence

Nare Hakobyan  
V. Brusov State University, Armenia

María Pilar Agustín Llach  
Leah Geoghegan  
Universidad de la Rioja, Spain

Professor Dodigovic, Marina, is not just a professor with an impressive teaching and research background, but an absolute master educator. Her work is internationally recognized and admired, widely quoted and read, and her dedication to her students is exemplary. As an English teacher, she achieved the remarkable feat of having ten of her students' stories published in the prestigious *Qatari Narratives* anthology series.

Her commitment to mentoring new generations is vast. She has successfully supervised over 50 Master's theses, several PhD dissertations, and a large number of BA capstone projects. Going above and beyond, she has consistently actively involved her students as researchers on grant-funded projects, and even provided them with the opportunity to publish in peer-reviewed volumes alongside established academics. She accomplishes all this while editing multiple scholarly volumes and pursuing challenging European funding calls.

On a personal level, Prof. Dodigovic is known for being an exceptionally hardworking person and for her deep commitment to seeing her students progress and improve. She is, without a doubt, a wonderful colleague and a loving and caring mentor whose impact on our research field and the lives of her students is immeasurable.

As one of the former students by Prof. Dodigovic wrote:

*I had the privilege of being one of Professor Marina Dodigovic's students in the MATEFL program. Her impact on my thinking, both as a teacher and a researcher, has been profound and enduring. Prof. Dodigovic was the first to challenge me to see classroom dilemmas not as failures to manage, but as opportunities to think more*

*deeply about what it means to teach ethically and responsively. Her mentorship taught me that pedagogy is never just about methods; it is about relationships, reflection, and responsibility.*

*This paper, and the classroom experiences that inform it, are shaped by the questions she encouraged me to ask, about culture, voice, and the ethics of language learning in a technologized world. I hope that in writing this piece, I have carried forward some part of her vision: a vision that placed human judgment at the heart of educational practice, and that believed firmly in the potential of students, not just to follow rules, but to become thoughtful, principled learners.*

*Prof. Dodigovic's work was ahead of its time. I feel fortunate to have learned from her when I did. (Oubab Mslam)*

The first theme which this special issue deals with is that of vocabulary, an area in which Prof. Dodigovic has published extensively. Of particular note is her attention to the practical application of findings from vocabulary research in the classroom. For example, her co-edited volume *Vocabulary in Curriculum Planning* (2020) addresses a seldom explored aspect of classroom needs analysis, uniting different perspectives and research on the potential uses of vocabulary assessment. Her work on vocabulary is complemented by the second key theme of this special issue, namely technology. It addresses a wide range of topics, such as automated writing evaluation and the use of online resources to foster vocabulary acquisition in a fun and engaging manner, all of which are discussed below. In addition to her publications in this area, Prof. Dodigovic is also the chair of the TESOL International Vocabulary Special Interest Group, a role which has come with the organization of important initiatives, events, and discussions in this area of expertise, as well as fostering collaboration and networking among professionals with shared interests. This in turn has further contributed to the growth of resources and publications in the field of vocabulary.

In the opening article within the theme of vocabulary, González de San Pedro Jiménez and Agustín Llach explore how age affects lexical availability in English as a foreign language (EFL) and in Spanish as an L1, comparing primary and secondary learners in the prompts 'Love' and 'Amar/Amor'. The findings show that the younger learners retrieve more tokens in both languages. In addition, while lexical availability graphs indicate similar categorisation patterns in both languages, there are clear qualitative differences in the words produced by each group.

In a similar vein, Palapanidi addresses the effect of proficiency on lexical availability, this time in Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) and Greek as an L1. She compares learners at the A level and B level of the CEFR in terms of their responses to the prompt 'Fruits and Vegetables'. Results reveal quantitative differences between the groups, with higher-level learners producing more responses. In addition, there was considerable mediation of the L1 at both levels in SFL, suggesting a high degree of translation of words retrieved in Greek to words retrieved in Spanish.

The topic of lexical availability is again addressed by Pérez Hernández, who explores the relationship between creativity and production in the prompt 'Food and Drink' in Spanish secondary EFL learners. In addition, she compares learners who are classified as monolinguals (Spanish EFL learners) and immigrant heritage speakers (EFL learners who speak Spanish in an educational context and another language at home). Findings reveal no statistically significant differences between the groups in either variable, though a moderate positive relationship was observed between creativity and EFL semantic fluency only in the monolingual group, independent of language proficiency. Qualitative differences were also

found in the learners' creativity levels and EFL semantic fluency; though the author highlights the need for further research in this regard.

Mora and Geoghegan similarly explore the lexical availability of heritage and non-heritage learners in a preliminary study which addresses the radial category '*Countryside*'. They assess both the quantitative and qualitative differences between the groups, analysing in particular the type/token ratios, the presence of cognates, and the prototypes in the words retrieved. While results suggest a clear quantitative advantage for non-heritage learners, the qualitative analysis reveals evidence of word prototypicality in the participants' responses and suggests that lexical performance is highly dependent on the prompt at hand.

Dernič, Šifrar Kalan and Vidonja present a study concerning the effects of demographic, experiential, and self-reported factors on vocabulary knowledge of Slovenian university students of Spanish. Using the LexTALE-Esp test, they explore a wide range of factors such as gender, age, course level, age of acquisition, participation in Erasmus+ Programmes, residence in Spanish-speaking environments, and self-reported language proficiency. Of these variables, all except gender were found to play a key role in the learners' vocabulary scores, suggesting that sustained exposure and an earlier onset of learning may be beneficial in vocabulary acquisition.

In the paper by Stubbs and Dodigovic, the authors researched the use of prepositions of the Armenian students in the university context where English was the medium of instruction. The aim was to address the existing gap on the topic among Armenian EFL students by identifying the most frequently used prepositions, the most common type of the preposition usage errors and the reasons behind such errors (interlingual or intralingual). The findings suggest that the most common errors were interlingual which is connected to the wide application of the obsolete Grammar-Translation method (Harutyunyan & Dodigovic, 2020).

The final paper on the topic of vocabulary, by Poghosyan, Safaryan and Madyarov, is about improvements in academic vocabulary, discourse markers, and reported verbs in an essay writing course at the beginning and at the end of the academic year. The findings indicate that the students experienced significant growth in academic vocabulary but no growth in the usage of discourse markers. As for reported verbs, the verbs in the *argue* and *show* categories increased in frequency, while *think* verbs declined.

The second theme of this special issue is devoted to technology integration into the EFL context, specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration. Prof. Dodigovic is widely recognized for her valuable contributions to the intersection of AI and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Her seminal book, *Artificial Intelligence in Second Language Learning: Raising Error Awareness* (2005), stands as the first publication to explore the integration of AI within the SLA context. Nearly three decades ago, Dr. Dodigovic was among the first scholars to foresee the transformative potential of AI in language education. She introduced the innovative concept of using AI as an interactive and adaptive tool to enhance English language proficiency. In addition to her pioneering research, Dr. Dodigovic was among the earliest academics to systematize hundreds of studies on AI and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in her book. Her comprehensive analyses of existing literature continue to serve as a reference and guide for young researchers. Remarkably, Prof. Dodigovic identified and discussed issues that were largely unexplored at the time such as the effect of AI applications on language learning. Building on these insights, she has continued to advance the field through diverse research projects encompassing automated writing evaluation tools like Grammarly,

vocabulary learning with electronic flashcards, and the use of speech processing technologies in language testing. Through her extensive scholarship and sustained commitment, Prof. Dodigovic has made an enduring impact on the fields of AI, CALL, and Information and Communication Technologies in language learning, inspiring new generations of researchers to expand on her visionary work.

Within the theme of technology, the article by Mslam raises an important question related to the use of AI in the Sino-foreign university context. The literature review tackles the confusion regarding and the consequences that might arise if AI integration into writing classrooms is viewed as unethical and unacceptable with the entailment of control and enforcement. The paper focuses on the elaboration of the conditions and regulations to make the integration of AI as smooth as possible by raising the ethical and cultural awareness. As a process, it is not an easy one and requires changes in the existing pedagogies, policies, and frameworks to help students develop the responsibility of the ethical usage of AI.

In the same strand, Hakobyan raises an important question connected to the performance of AI in designing reading comprehension tests. In this quasi-experimental mixed-method research, AI performance is compared with teachers' performance in order to find out what strengths and weaknesses it exhibits in comparison with teachers when generating the tests, and what attitudes students have to AI. The research shows that AI-generated tests were slightly less consistent than the teacher-designed tests. Strengths of the AI-generated tests included covering the whole texts, generating items in question form, providing the same number of options and generating cognitively unmarked items. As for the weaknesses, the options were not homogeneous and were mostly detail-oriented. Moreover, the distracters were not taken from the text whereas the keys were verbatim borrowings from the text, this way making answering easy.

In the next article, Rosandić and Štefić integrate AI in the teaching of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). The students were exposed to ten core mechanical engineering collocations that were tested in the pre- and post-tests. After the pre-test the students were introduced to the collocations in a rich context and required to engage with AI to learn their meanings. Moreover, the students were expected to write a paragraph with each collocation and were then required to ask for feedback from AI and make the suggested changes. The results indicated a marked growth in the learning of the collocations emphasizing the effective impact that AI can have in domain-specific contexts. Moreover, the students were confident about the use of those collocations and were satisfied with the engagement that AI provided.

In a similar vein, Pavičić Takač and Tabak propose a test for assessing collocational knowledge in an English for Specific Purposes context by adopting both corpus-based analyses of learner language and test-based investigations of receptive and productive collocation knowledge. Regarding the former, the authors focus on the lexical domains of traffic and transport, compiling a specialised corpus and identifying the relevant collocations. Regarding the latter, final tests used account for both lexical and grammatical accuracy, and include receptive, receptive-productive, and productive tasks. Findings show that the tasks varied in difficulty and discriminability, with the receptive-productive test proving to be the most powerful tool for assessment of collocation use in specialized contexts.

The special issue ends with an interview with Prof. Dodigovic. In the interview, she offers biographical glimpses from her professional journey, showing that innovation and progress are often challenging at first. However, she emphasizes that dedication and purposeful action can

make any dream achievable, regardless of timing. Furthermore, she elaborates on her internationally rich academic and professional pathway across top-tier universities, sharing memories from each country in which she has lived and worked. Most importantly, the interview is filled with valuable advice for young researchers. Prof. Dodigovic objectively analyses the current challenges facing early-career scholars and offers specific suggestions on how to achieve success.

As a concluding note, this special issue dedicated to Prof. Dodigovic aims to acknowledge and reflect on the enduring legacy she has built through her scholarly and professional achievements. Although a single volume cannot fully capture the breadth of her contributions, the papers presented here offer innovative insights into vocabulary research and the application of AI in language education. Collectively, the studies extend current understanding of vocabulary instruction in EFL and bilingual contexts across diverse learner populations. The AI-focused contributions further engage with essential questions concerning the ethical use of AI, performance areas requiring improvements, and its integration within LSP contexts. We trust that readers of this special issue will find valuable insights to inform and inspire their own approaches to vocabulary teaching and the thoughtful inclusion of AI in educational practice.

## References

- Dodigovic, M. (2005). *Artificial intelligence in second language learning: Raising error awareness*. Multilingual Matters.
- Dodigovic, M., & Agustín-Llach, M. P. (Eds.) (2020). *Vocabulary in curriculum planning*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harutyunyan, N., & Dodigovic, M. (2020). Lexical errors in the writing of EFL students in the Armenian context. In Dodigovic, M. & Augustin Llach, M.P. (Eds.) *Vocabulary in curriculum planning: Needs, strategies and tools*. Palgrave Macmillan.