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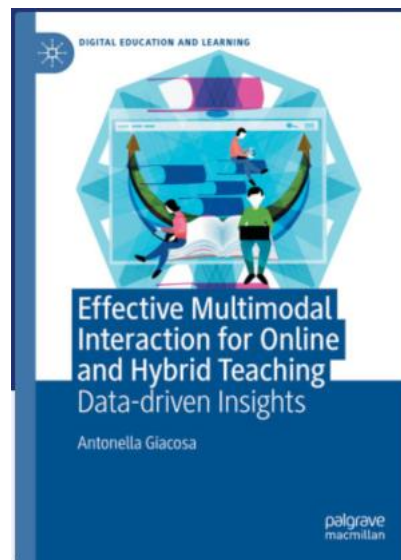
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Effective Multimodal Interaction for Online and Hybrid Teaching is a book that explores how teachers are currently using technology in their classrooms. On a broader scale, it examines how the global pandemic presented an opportunity to rethink how we teach and the ways in which education systems worldwide adapted to online and hybrid instruction when COVID-19 forced them to do so.



Author **Antonella Giacosa** builds on the big pivot to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), which means schools suddenly swapped out their usual classroom routines for remote lessons. ERT wasn't planned or ideal, but it was essential (see Bozkurt et al., 2020). When the crisis ends, people will revert to the old ways, the old system, back to in-person classes (Barbour et al., 2020). Yet as the pandemic forced teachers around the world to switch from face-to-face to screens and online platforms, it became evident just how much real-time interaction is fundamental to education, especially language education, and how rapidly teachers had to adapt to learning new skills to navigate the complexity of multimodal communication.

This review takes a closer look at the book's theories, research methods, and what it offers to the world of digital education. It does not just talk about what works; it also points out what falls short, weighing how relevant the book is for both academic research and practical teaching strategies.

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In Chapter 1, the COVID-19 pandemic was not a temporary disruption but a turning point that forced higher education, particularly L2/EFL teaching, to shift rapidly toward synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid digital learning. Teachers became "beacons in the storm" (p. 20), not merely delivering content but stabilizing classes, providing technical guidance, and offering emotional support during a crisis. The central concern is sustaining classroom interaction in online and hybrid environments, understood as a core dimension of learning rather than a supplementary feature. Following Moore's framework, three interaction types—learner-content, learner-teacher, and learner-learner—all remain essential in digital spaces, though each requires different management approaches from those of physical classrooms. This gives rise to e-CIC (electronic Classroom Interactional Competence): the teacher's ability to manage multimodal digital interaction effectively.

A key critical stance is that online interaction must not be viewed as a "second-class" version of face-to-face learning. It is different, not inferior. This challenges the old bias that digital learning is inherently weaker, when in fact pedagogical design quality and teachers' interactional competence are what matter. The Chapter 1 also critiques the reality that many teachers were forced to adapt without adequate training while their workload increased from managing simultaneous synchronous and asynchronous communication. Yet the pandemic is also framed as an opportunity with the introduction of increased digital literacy, flexible attendance, new pedagogical habits, and richer multimodal learning. The crisis functions as a large-scale experiment showing that online teaching can become effective when teachers master tools, interactional rhythm, and feedback strategies.

In Chapter 2, the methodological foundation shows that digital classroom interaction cannot be understood through a single approach. Combining ethnography, multimodality, conversation analysis, and mixed methods produces a more complete picture. The main challenge is high analytical complexity and dependence on researcher interpretation, meaning readers should view this as a highly contextual study rather than a directly generalizable model. The research is substantively relevant, emerging from the pandemic-driven shift to online/hybrid learning where classroom interaction moved from face-to-face to device-mediated exchange. The digital classroom is not simply a substitute for physical space but a multimodal environment combining text, voice, visuals, emojis, chat, and other non-verbal cues, all of which are crucial because in language teaching, meaning is shaped not only by spoken utterances but also by how participants navigate turn-taking, chat, and visual signals.

Three key concepts, multimodality, affordance, and mode switching, explain why online interaction cannot be analyzed through verbal utterances alone. Student participation also occurs through chat, emoji, reactions, or response delays carrying pedagogical meaning. Linking these to conversation analysis (turn-taking, disrupted adjacency pairs, IRF/IRFRF patterns) sharpens the micro-level analysis, capturing dynamics often missed in conventional classroom analysis. However, some concepts risk being too broad without operational boundaries. Terms like "student agency" and "digital multimodal environment"

are complex constructs that become variously interpreted without measurable indicators. The use of mean, mode, and minimum for quantitative analysis aids cross-class comparability but is too simplistic to capture richer interaction variation, participation intensity, contribution quality, or relationships between class type and participation patterns. The descriptive analysis is strong but doesn't fully translate findings into a highly structured analytical model. Pedagogically, this chapter signals that teachers need stronger digital and multimodal competencies to manage classroom interaction effectively in partially or fully digital environments not just platform mastery but understanding how participation can be facilitated across multiple communication channels. For language teaching, interaction strategies must become more flexible, since digital classrooms open participation pathways that do not always follow traditional oral patterns. The teacher's role shifts from content deliverer to manager of a more complex interactional ecology.

In Chapter 3, asynchronous teaching is not merely an emergency solution during the pandemic but a mirror of institutional readiness gaps, lecturer digital competence, and diverse student learning needs. Conceptually, it relies on digital materials, LMS platforms, forums, email, and recorded classes to transcend the constraints of space and time. However, this flexibility doesn't automatically produce effective learning. Success depends heavily on pedagogical design, digital literacy, and interaction quality. Asynchronous learning is not "naturally" superior; it demands careful planning to avoid becoming merely a material repository. From teachers' perspectives, the sudden transition of the pandemic forced many to rebuild their teaching identity in digital spaces. The "online teacher persona" becomes important because in asynchronous environments, instructor presence is no longer supported by physical embodiment, gaze, direct intonation, and non-verbal cues, but by written language, font choices, colors, images, and message tone on platforms. This is a pertinent observation showing that technology is not merely a technical medium but a space for constructing pedagogical relationships. However, despite teachers' efforts to build warmth and closeness, 59% of students still perceived platforms as formal and impersonal meaning aesthetic and multimodal strategies help but cannot fully replace the social presence typical of face-to-face classrooms.

In Chapter 4, synchronous online teaching creates a new interactional ecology with significant pedagogical opportunities and limitations, rather than just transferring in-person classes to screens. Crucially, the success of online classes depends not only on the platform but also on the teachers' capacity to foster participation, presence, and a sense of community in geographically disparate but socially connected environments. Through real-time interaction, facial expression access, and collaborative work, video conferencing can enhance language learning. However, its effectiveness only becomes apparent when educators recognize the multimodal nature of the digital environment. In the meantime, the pandemic put educators and students in emergency mode without providing them with the necessary training, which led to weariness, anxiety, and confusion about how to handle interactions. This demonstrates that technology only creates opportunities when pedagogy is rethought rather than being forced to replicate traditional classroom settings.

In Chapter 5, the experiences of teachers and students at the University of Turin are the focus of Giacosa's analysis of hybrid synchronous teaching in foreign language instruction both during and after COVID-19. Supported by empirical data from surveys of 30 teachers and 57 students in 2023, classroom observations, and triadic dialogue capturing multimodal interaction dynamics, the author traces the model's evolution from pre-pandemic experiments (HyFlex, synchronomodal) to mass implementation in 2020-2021, when teachers taught simultaneously in physical and virtual spaces. Crucially, the method ignores structural injustices, such as how universities prioritize in-person attendance for local economic reasons, which affects how teachers allocate their attention: 41 percent of teachers admitted prioritizing in-person students. This exacerbates the feeling of exclusion experienced by online students because they are frequently "forgotten" in chat or because of improper webcam placement. The cognitive strain teachers face when "reading two rooms simultaneously" is a startling discovery.

Chapter 6 centers on pedagogical implications for future teaching situations. The abrupt shift to online learning during the pandemic was not only a technological change, but an epistemological change in the conception of the teaching-learning process. The pandemic has exposed how teacher unpreparedness for the digitalization of education revealed weaknesses in educational systems that were heavily dependent on face-to-face contact. Although technology has been available for a long time, adoption was often superficial; a large gap was revealed between technological development and pedagogical readiness. This has accelerated the need for innovation but also revealed that many educational practices were not designed to be adaptive to change.

One of the significant findings worthy of critique is the notion of social presence in online learning. Instead of physical presence, teacher presence becomes constructed through digital communication, instructional design, and multimodal interaction, but this raises another concern: not all teachers have the digital literacy and reflective capacity to construct this presence. This is the challenge of the digital age for teacher education. To ensure that we prepare teachers for the future, we must address this challenge in teacher education.

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Nguyen Tien Da is an expert in the fields of educational science and mathematics, currently working at the Faculty of Education, Hanoi Metropolitan University, as a Lecturer and Deputy Director of the master's program in elementary mathematics methods. He graduated with a PhD in theory and methods of teaching mathematics from the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences in 2024 and possesses extensive experience in teaching and in-depth scientific research on calculus, differential equations, and modern teaching methods such as realistic mathematics education, flipped classroom, and project-based learning. Dr. Tien Da has published a large number of high-quality scientific articles in international and domestic journals and actively participates in research projects and mentors students who have won many high awards in Mathematics Olympiads and student scientific research competitions.



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About the Author



Antonella Giacosa has been an EFL teacher at secondary schools for more than 20 years and an ELT lecturer at the foreign language department at the University of Turin, Italy, since 2017. She is currently working on her PhD in digital humanities in the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Modern Cultures at the University of Torino, Italy. She is an educational linguist interested in innovative, intercultural and transdisciplinary approaches in ELT. She is part of research teams working on the internationalisation and innovation of the curriculum at her school and university institutes in Italy and abroad. She is a reviewer for articles on distance learning in various scientific journals and has published several articles on emergency distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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