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Internet as a Tool of Foreign Languages Teaching

Over the past few years, the Internet has emerged as a new technology. The influence of such a powerful technological tool has penetrated all aspects of the educational, business, and economic sectors of our world. The Internet carries great potential for educational use, specifically foreign language education.

One of the most essential pedagogical principles of foreign language teaching is one that emphasizes the study of language in a cross-cultural context. Understanding the culture of the target language enhances understanding of the language. The Internet is a valuable resource to both language teachers and learners. The Internet facilitates the use of the specific language in an authentic setting. The Internet can also be used to acquire information from language resources for a variety of purposes. For example, students can access current information from countries around the world. They can get different information from the countries in which the target language is spoken. Students can read web versions of daily newspapers. Such experiences can allow learners to participate in the culture of the target language, which in turn can enable them to further learn how cultural background influences one's view of the world.

The Internet also serves as a medium for experiencing and presenting creative works. While students can peruse the information on the Net, they can also use it as a basis for their own work such as essays, poetry, or stories. Students therefore become not only consumers of content, but in fact generate the content.

The use of the Internet could be used to promote thinking skills. A language teacher, for example, may instruct learners to search for specific information. Searching the Web requires logic skills. Once information has been obtained, the results must be reviewed which requires scanning, discarding, and evaluative judgment on part of the learner. The information must be put together to make a complete and coherent whole

which entails the synthesis process. Communication with native speakers furthers literacy development for authentic purposes, enables language learners to compare student perspectives on an issue, and allows them to practice specific skills such as negotiating, persuading, clarifying meaning, requesting information, and engaging in true-life, authentic discussion. Promotion of literacy also occurs within a social context. The interaction that results from the above situations can lead to cooperative projects and increased communication between students from all over the world, in turn leading to the development of social skills. Finally, use of the Internet can promote computer skills and the technical and conceptual experiences of using a computer.

The Internet provides supplemental language activities which can provide students with additional practice in specific areas of language learning. These include reading tests and comprehension questions, grammar exercises, pronunciation exercises possible through the available multimedia capabilities, cloze tests, vocabulary exercises, and so forth. Students can search the Web for such sites, or teachers may recommend specific sites on the Web. Published lists are also available from various sources.

Teachers must become familiar with using the Internet and its various functions. They must also learn how to use specific search tools in order to access information, search for lesson plans, or material and ideas to supplement their lessons. Lastly, language teachers must learn now to transfer files from Internet sites to their own computer and vice versa. Obtaining information or literature on the Internet, either through the Net itself, through books, or by attending workshops and courses will further assist this process. To avoid facing the same difficulties or problems associated with use of the Internet, teachers can ask students to keep track of problems that arise during use. In essence, language teachers must take the plunge and approach the Internet as a learning experience themselves. The more enthusiastic and more knowledgeable language teachers are, the more successfully they can implement Internet in the language classroom. For the language learner, the Internet offers a world of information available to students at the touch of a button. While it

must be recognized that the Internet cannot replace the language classroom or the interaction between the language teacher and student, if offers a vast amount of information and lends itself to communication possibilities that can greatly enhance the language learning experience.

With its advantages and disadvantages, the internet has significant effects on communicating, teaching and learning. Thus, both teachers and learners should have the chance of internet accessibility, experience and familiarity with its functions in educational life. For this purpose, before using the internet in second language learning and teaching activities, teachers and learners should be instructed. This is a must to use it in language classrooms efficiently. On the other hand, it should be known that the internet is not sufficient itself to teach and learn a second language. In other words, it cannot include all teaching and learning activities and be replaced the real teaching and learning environment, such as language classroom and real-life communication. As a result, it is only a tool for educational activities. However, it can be implicated that the research has not concluded on the issue yet. Thus, research issue should focus on a great variety of the internet use in language learning and teaching such as attitudes of learners and teachers towards it, individual differences on using the internet, effective ways to use it, the suitability of educational and instructive purposes and the effects on teaching and learning. As a final point, it is possible to say that technology is not a purpose but only a tool for all humanistic necessities.

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