

REVIEW OF *THE INTERNET*

The Internet

(from the series *Resource Books for Teachers*, Alan Maley, Ed.)

Scott Windeatt, David Hardisty, & David Eastment

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Many scholars have argued in favor of using content-based materials to teach a second language, rather than focusing narrowly on the acquisition of particular structures (Genesee, 1987; Guntermann, 1993; Terrell, 1986). While textbooks and readers offer selected articles and topics as a basis for language-learning activities and discussions, the Internet and the World Wide Web provide a virtually inexhaustible source of authentic target-culture materials, infinitely responsive to the interests of the student. The challenge for the instructor is to come up with well-defined activities, and to locate appropriate Web sites for student interaction. *The Internet*, in the Oxford series *Resource Books for Teachers*, provides a practical manual for the language teacher who wants to use the Internet as a resource in the classroom. Recognizing that teachers' reactions to the Internet range from anxiety and confusion to uncritical enthusiasm with similarly disparate Internet ability, Windeatt, Hardisty, and Eastment seek to provide material useful to both the novice and the expert. There is a corresponding Web site (<http://www.oup.com/elt/rbt.internet>) with downloadable worksheets, quarterly updates of the links and information in the book, and opportunities for feedback.

In the Introduction, the authors explain their perception that the feature which sets the Internet apart from more traditional CALL is that the Internet is a "medium of exploration" (p. 6). As a result, the activities they provide are designed to encourage exploration by students and teachers while also offering language practice and opportunities to refine web-related computer skills. This is a complex undertaking, but one which is broken into logical and manageable steps in this volume.

In addition to establishing the foundation for the rest of the book, the Introduction considers methodological issues such as lesson management and the incorporation of both pre-computer and post-computer activities. According to the authors, pre-computer work includes the use of advanced organizers (Ausubel, 1968; Terrell, 1991) to focus on upcoming lexical items and grammatical structures so that they are more likely to be "noticed" in the input (Schmidt, 1990), and, therefore, have a better chance of becoming "intake" (Corder, 1967). Prior to beginning the computer work, instructors are also encouraged to demonstrate exactly what students will encounter and what they will be expected to do. The authors also recommend the use of written instructions to clarify procedures and expectations for activities, and they emphasize the importance of considering student interaction patterns which arise during the completion of a given computer-based activity. Specifically, instructors should consider whether working individually or in groups of two or three on one computer is more appropriate for attaining the goals of a particular activity. According to the authors, post-computer work should offer students the opportunity to take away some record of their Internet-based work activities. For example, worksheets, or even Web page print-outs can provide the basis for follow-up classroom activities which link the Internet activities to the rest of the curriculum.

However, the Introduction, and the argument in favor of incorporating the Internet in second language (L2) classes, could have been made stronger by pointing out that the Internet can provide the foundation for the types of activities espoused by scholars of second language acquisition. Specifically, the use of e-mail, bulletin boards, and Internet relay chat can provide opportunities for output and interaction (including negotiation of meaning and the use of communicative strategies), which are currently believed to promote SLA (Long, 1981, 1996; Pica, 1987, 1994, 1996; Swain 1985, 1993, 1995). Similarly, the Internet offers a wealth of authentic materials which can provide learners with input.

The rest of the book is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, "Core Internet Skills," provides activities designed to familiarize readers with search techniques and ways of organizing information from the World Wide Web. Chapter 2, "Focus on Language," presents activities spotlighting vocabulary and grammar. The activities in chapter 3, "Focus on language skills," target the four skills and include exercises which introduce intermediate and advanced L2 students to translation and interpretation techniques. The six appendices include a glossary of Internet terms (which appear in bold on first use in the text), two instructional sections (one concerns the Web and the other discusses the use of computers for communication), listings and links to Internet teaching and software resources, a bibliography, and updates to the "Activity Links" (the Web sites suggested for use in the activities in chapters 1, 2, and 3).

Each chapter introduces the focus of that unit, followed by a series of activities, conveniently listed in the table of contents with language level and estimated time required for completion. The activities have catchy titles such as "Tough Questions, Cross Words," "The Play's the Thing," and "Fingers Crossed." Each activity provides a cookbook-style listing of the following: level, time required, goals, technical requirements (e.g., equipment, software, special knowledge), preparation required, step-by-step instructions, follow-up activities (in or

outside of class), variations (for different levels of students, numbers of computers or different types of materials), and notes. In addition, some of the activities have a table or worksheet for the student to fill out. The worksheet appears not only printed in the book, but also as a downloadable Word file on the corresponding Web site. In order to save the teacher from wrestling over any copyright issues, Oxford University Press has considerably identified each table as "Photocopiable © Oxford University Press."

The authors have taken care to present complete, self-contained activities which can also serve as starting points for further discussion and learning. A teacher with once-a-week access to the computer lab could easily rely on *The Internet* for the weekly lab activity. Even with more frequent access, one would have to work hard to exhaust the activities in the book. Thirteen activities are classified as being for students at the "elementary" or "elementary and above" levels, and another six deemed appropriate for "all" levels. Twenty-seven activities are for "intermediate," "intermediate and above," or "intermediate and advanced," and three are expressly "advanced" activities. Of course, regardless of the suggested level or skill-focus, the teacher is free to tailor any activity to the individual class. For example, more emphasis could be given to the integration of the skills, as in the Learning Scenario approach of the National Foreign Language Standards espoused by ACTFL and other language teachers associations. *The Internet* is especially useful for integrating the skills because of its flexibility, the variety of source material (audio/written texts to be used as input), and the multiple platforms (e-mail, bulletin boards, and Internet relay chat) that it provides for student production and interaction with other learners and native speakers of the target language.

One outstanding feature of the book is its clarity of writing and "jargon-less" explanations for language teachers who may not have much experience with Internet technologies. In addition, the volume is characterized by uncluttered, easy-to-read layouts and effective use of font changes to highlight the infrastructure of the activities.

Written for classrooms where English is the target language, this volume will likely be useful for L2 teachers of other languages, provided they are willing to carry out the additional ground work required. In other words, the ideas presented in *The Internet* can be adapted to the teaching of almost any language, although instructors will have to find appropriate target language Web sites and create language-specific worksheets and materials.

While this is a book explaining the wonders of the Internet, it is somewhat disappointing that the contact information for the organizations in the appendix was not all verified before publication, a task which could have been easily accomplished using the Internet. It is hard to overlook that the entries for two leading language-professional organizations in the United States, (i.e., TESOL and CALICO) are out-of-date. While the URLs are accurate, the contact information and mailing addresses changed in July 1999 for TESOL, and in early 1998 for CALICO. Fortunately, the authors will be able to update the information on the book's companion Web site, where feedback and suggestions are also solicited. Another inconvenience of the Web site is the fact that it contains only the activity links which have

changed since publication of the book, rather than all of the suggested links for the activities. While some of the URLs provided are short and easy enough to enter manually, others are fairly long, and thus are prone to human input errors. It would be more convenient to have them all as links on the Web site. These minor details, however, do not detract from the overall success of the book.

The Internet focuses specifically on how the Internet can be used in the language classroom. Unlike Williams' (1999) *The Internet for Teachers*, from the popular "...for Dummies" series, which concentrates on the technology of the Internet in teaching, and Gitsake and Taylor's (1999) *Internet English*, a WWW-based intermediate conversation textbook for students, the authors of *The Internet* sought to create an internet cookbook for the language teacher. Mix the ingredients strictly according to the recipes in the book, or add a dash of your own inspiration, and your students will have a rewarding internet-mediated L2 experience.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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