

USING WEB RESOURCES WHILE TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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The wealth of the information available on the Web can afford teachers and learners to get an access to language learning resources like never before. The World Wide Web expands the classroom context and provided access to current, up-to-date materials from the country or countries of the target language, offering learners and teachers a great amount of materials in different modes, bringing the foreign culture and language to life and making it more tangible. Online journals, newspapers and magazines provide authentic materials for language learners while teachers can find lesson plans and ideas, exercises, assessment tools and other materials for using in their classes.

In environments where teaching staff is not able to fulfill all requirements of the curriculum with regards to the skills and knowledge required, ready-made, high quality audio-visual and other programmes may provide sufficient backup for them to offer appropriate courses without having to engage in time-consuming and expensive retraining.

For many students it is already more common to encounter a different language on the Internet than anywhere else. So it makes sense then to study a language in the context in which it is used, including the context of the cyberspace. While many of the students are relatively computer literate and have been surfing the Internet for a long time on their own, most of them are unclear about how to use the Internet as a tool to foster their own language learning. That is why we should introduce students to the incredible language learning resources that are currently available online, show them the ways to use these resources in their own language learning and help students learn how to search the Internet for even more language resources.

When integrated into the language curriculum, the Internet can help students capture the social context of language use. More important, the Internet has the

potential to enable students to communicate in the target language with native speakers in ways which could not be imagined a few years ago.

There are two main advantages of Web materials which can be served as components of any course of training, whether university-based or individual and independent. The first advantage is fast and easy access to current information in order to answer questions and find solutions to problems. Thus, the Web becomes a virtual library allowing the students and teachers to quickly locate and access documents that would otherwise not be available or that may only be found via a trip to library located far away, significant difficulties for the teacher facing considerable time constraints. Generally speaking, these documents can be considered traditional because they resemble a typical printed page. The advantage of the Web, therefore, is its simple and easy access.

The second advantage of the Web is the possibility of using the power of the computer to implement interactive, multimedia presentation being able to support realistic simulations providing material that the teacher can manipulate. This can make for a much richer learning experience than a more traditional “page-turner” type presentation where the information is displayed essentially as it would be in a book. The manipulation, designed to imitate the experience of active involvement in the learning process that one normally associates with work in a classroom environment, is a powerful feature that would be impossible to reproduce without the aid of the computer.

The development of Web-based language teaching and learning activities is sure to continue to be an exciting and growing field. With the focus on language, communication, and culture in the national standards for foreign languages learning teachers are continually searching for better ways of accessing authentic materials and providing experiences that will improve their students’ knowledge and skills in these target areas. As the Internet has transformed communication around the world it is natural that it should play a major role in the foreign language classroom.