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Modern technologies in foreign language teaching

Recent years have shown an explosion of interest in using computers for language teaching and learning. A decade ago, the use of computers in the language classroom was of concern only to a small number of specialists. However, with the advent of multimedia computing and the Internet, the role of computers in language instruction has now become an important issue confronting large numbers of language teachers throughout the world.

With recent advances in multimedia technology, computer-aided language learning (CALL) has emerged as a tempting alternative to traditional modes of supplementing or replacing direct student-teacher interaction, such as the language laboratory or audio-tape-based self-study. The integration of sound, voice interaction, text, video and animation has made it possible to create self-paced interactive learning environments that promise to enhance the classroom model of language learning significantly. A growing number of textbook publishers now offer educational software of some sort and educators can choose among a large variety of different products.

A number of reasons have been cited for the limited practical impact of computer-based language instruction. Among them are the lack of a unified theoretical framework for designing and evaluating CALL systems, the absence of conclusive empirical evidence for the pedagogical benefits of computers in language learning and, finally, the current limitations of the technology itself.

In addition to computer-based applications a number of other technological aids are being used regularly by foreign language teachers, such as (satellite) television and video-recorders or camcorders. Also, a number of computer-peripherals, such as scanners, digital video cameras, data projection units or interactive whiteboards increasingly find application in the context of foreign language teaching and learning.

In order to become competent users, students need to have frequent opportunities to use information and communication technologies (ICT).

ICT should not be seen as a possible replacement or challenge to the importance of the foreign language teacher. Indeed, the use of ICT makes the role of the teacher more important but ICT use requires new pedagogical skills from teachers, such as the ability to evaluate multimodal resources.