Modern Technology in Foreign Language Education: Applications and Projects

Vital Statistics

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Introduction

Our society's fascination with technological advances seems to have no bounds; this is particularly evident in the rapid move toward applying new technologies to the process of education. Foreign language educators are no exception to this, as anyone who reads such specialized publications as *CALICO* and *The Journal of Educational Techniques and Technologies* can tell you. The volume being reviewed here presents 29 articles which cover a wide variety of topics under two rubrics: *applications* of technology and description of particular *projects* which are the result of such applications.

Applications

The first section of the book is divided into seven chapters, each of which deals with a particular technology applied to language teaching. All of these chapters are intriguing, but among the most interesting are the following: 1) Otto's assessment of the impact of new audio, video, and computer technologies in the revitalization of the language laboratory. This is a particularly timely topic because the advent of exciting new technologies is coinciding with the demise—in many institutions—of equipment installed in the heyday of audio-lingualism; 2) Richardson and Scinicariello's discussion of the

advantages and disadvantages of television as a medium of instruction. The authors note that television is an "old" technology (p. 65), therefore students and teachers are comfortable with it, yet it is evolving and will continue to provide second language learners with real, or at least realistic models for language use in context; 3) Bush and Crotty's essay on the relationship between current theories of second language acquisition and interactive videodisc instruction. They claim that interactive videodisc provides the learner with meaningful input and the opportunity to manipulate the linguistic environment, both of which are essential for true language acquisition, as postulated in Krashen's research (pp. 86-87); and 4) Robinson's report on the results of a study done by the Center for Language and Crosscultural Skills on the effectiveness of computer-assisted language learning (CALL).

Although the authors' conclusions are tentative, all point to the need for creating language-learning materials which are "presented and practiced within an *integrated context* in which students' attention is focused on the *meaning* of the material and language is used to *draw inferences* as in *solving a problem.*" (p. 131.

Projects

This section contains 18 relatively short articles which describe various projects which have integrated the various new technologies into existing or entirely new language learning environments. Of particular interest are Wohlert's article on using television programs transmitted via satellite from Germany; articles by Gale and Verano on the creation of videodisc software for language instruction; Larson's description of "S-CAPE," a computerized adaptive placement

exam for Spanish developed at Brigham Young University; and Balas' article on computer software development at Western Washington University.

Conclusions

Modern Technology in Foreign Language Education should be read by anyone interested in the use of technology to further the goals of foreign language learning. The volume has many strengths, among them the fact that it is a book which has something for everyone—from the technophile to the relatively uninitiated in such matters. Another important feature is that many of the articles include fairly extensive bibliographies, a must for those who want to read further in the field, and there is an appendix which lists sources for hardware and software. Some of the articles in the first section may be somewhat difficult for neophytes, however, overall, the volume is well-balanced in terms of ease of access to most readers. It is an excellent introduction to the possibilities which exist now, and those which, due to rapid technological change, will most certainly confront us in the not so distant future of foreign language education.

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