[Book Review]

Teaching ESL/EFL with the Internet: Catching the wave

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Title	Teaching ESL/EFL with the Internet: Catching the wave
Authors	Carine M. Feyten, Michelle D. Macy, Jeannie Ducher, Makoto Yoshii, Eunwook Park, Brendan Calandra, and John Meros
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I received the book as an evaluation copy for a pre-service teacher-training course on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in Singapore. At first sight, a long list of seven authors immediately gave me the impression of a disorganised quick collection of ideas. I immediately went to the author-introduction page, suspecting that it was the work of students. Sure enough, except for the first author, Dr Feyten, who is the Chair of Secondary Education, University of South Florida, most others are either current or past Ph.D. students at USF. Nevertheless, as I began to thumb through the book, I was increasingly impressed with its consistency, so much so that I decided to write this book review to recommend it to English language teachers who are looking for ideas of IT integration.

Teaching ESL/EFL with the Internet: Catching the wave is a book of ideas, and is written with classroom teachers in mind. It aims to equip "instructors with the necessary pedagogical principles for using technology in language classes while providing them with field-tested sample activities that can be implemented immediately or used as practical guides and frameworks with which to create their own lessons." (p. iii)

In all, thirty practical activities are divided into five chapters: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture. Each chapter begins with a chapter introduction in the form of a rationale and guides for integrating ... into English language instruction," followed by bulleted teaching tips and tips for students on the specific skill that the chapter focuses on. Six unrelated activities are next presented, two for beginning level, two for intermediate level, and two for advanced level students. Each activity is presented in terms of a brief introduction, a teacher guide, student worksheets and activities, further activities, and possible modifications according to student levels.

All activities are carefully designed to follow the general principle of learning through meaningful and natural communication using authentic materials. Understandably, some activities are more successful than others in this regard. In the

following paragraphs, I will analyse activities in Chapter 1 as an example to show the extent to which these activities achieve their intended purposes.

Chapter 1 focuses on using the Internet in the teaching of listening. Activity 1.1 directs students to a biography web site and asks them to listen for information about John Wayne and fill out a worksheet. The next activity requires students to work in pairs. Each student gets materials from several websites about animals and then uses Microsoft NetMeeting to describe his chosen animal to his partner without letting the partner know what the animal is. The listener is supposed to fill out a listener worksheet and guess the animal's identity. I don't see why the conferencing program is necessary for enhancing listening or speaking. It will be much more natural and efficient if students simply talk to each other face to face. Likewise, asking students to make their sound-file recordings of celebrity information they get from the Internet and asking the whole class to fill out a listen-and-match exercise on a worksheet (Activity 1.4) may not necessarily be the most efficient and effective way of doing the task.

On the other hand, Activity 1.5 is an excellent example of how the Internet can enhance English learning, and why it cannot be replaced by other media. Students are supposed to use Real Video and watch the news clips at foxnews.com. Individually, they select a news headline and guess what it is about. They then work in pairs, watch the video clip, and discuss their predictions. Next, they watch the clip again, and answer specific questions on a worksheet such as "What happened?" and "Who was involved?" Students finally share the news with their class and present their personal opinions. The activity involves the sub-skill of prediction and top-down processing in listening, the integration of listening, speaking, and reading, as well as listening for information. Current events on the web are authentic materials much more motivating than pre-recorded tapes. Moreover, students are engaged at different levels in an individual, pair, and classwork.

The book claims to give both pedagogical guidance and practical ideas. The former is mainly realised utilizing the rationale section at the beginning of each chapter. However, I find the one-or-two-page rationale for Internet integration a bit too short. Moreover, it does not always include current thinking and research behind the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture. Internet integration in the language classroom is a new skill. As such teachers need to reflect upon the why, what, when, where, who, as well as the how of IT integration. Ideally, the language teacher, after reading a book on IT integration, should be able to not only carry out each of the 30 activities smoothly but also know why these thirty activities are good for students' language development in the first place. Only then can he transfer the specific skill of carrying out 30 activities into a generic ability to come out with his activities for students at different levels, in different contexts, and with different Internet tools.

On a technical note, the book could also use a bit more care in copy-editing. Typographical errors such as "Cuts and Dogs" for "Cats and Dogs" (p.16) and "appropriate strategies" for "appropriate strategies" (p.97) could be easily removed.

Teachers need ideas, especially practical ideas that can be directly used or adapted in the classroom. The Internet is such a new tool that nobody can claim to have mastered its full potential for language teaching. For teachers who are bold enough to explore how this new tool can be used for teaching, the ideas will inspire more and better ideas. Ideas based on sound language learning theories are especially useful in demonstrating how language learning theories, technology, and classroom teaching can be integrated. To this

end, this book is a very good start toward supplying the sparks needed for a fire. Although I have decided not to use it as a textbook for my teacher-training course, I would strongly recommend it to English language teachers who are looking for a good resource book of practical ideas for Internet integration.