

## REVIEW OF *THE INTERNET AND THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS*

### The Internet and the Language Classroom: A Practical Guide for Teachers

Gavin Dudeney

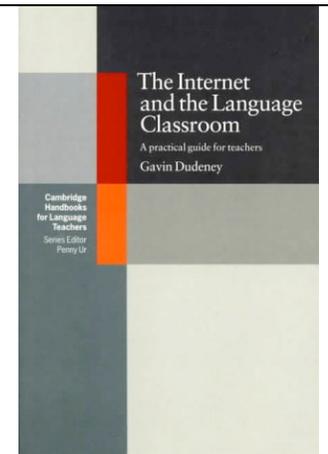
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#### Review by Gillian Lord, University of Florida

This volume joins the already established and respected series of *Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers* (Penny Ur, series editor) and proves to be another indispensable tool for language teachers -- this time, for the teacher setting out to use the Internet in her/his language class. The blurb on the back of the book begins with the enticing, "Are you interested in using the Internet in your classroom but don't know where to start?" We are all aware, of course, of the increasing demands for teachers to include technology into our curricula, and anyone who has taught teacher training or methodology courses will tell you there is often fear or hesitation at this quite daunting feat. Fear no more! The solution lies in this very volume. While the advanced techno-teachers will find the book a bit too basic and will be easily bored at some of the baby-steps approach, especially early on, this practical guide to everything from opening a program to creating Internet class activities is the best and most approachable starter's guide I have seen.

In the introduction to the volume, Dudeney notes that the Internet may be the "perfect medium" for language teachers, but many people are unsure of how to take advantage of it. This sentiment is echoed in the growing trend of recent research in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), in which scholars are beginning to realize that the bells-and-whistles approach to technology will not work in our language classrooms. While each teacher must adopt the technological practices that work best with his/her own methodology and pedagogical beliefs, the field is coming to accept that we must have more motivation than the simple fact that the technology is available. This book provides that motivation for those who were lacking it before.

There are a number of benefits to the format in which Dudeney has structured this volume. Throughout the book the author provides "hands on" activity boxes that allow the reader to put in to practice what s/he is reading, such as sending her/his first email or exploring a Web site. There are also sections called "Tips," which provide excellent reminders and advice, from the extremely basic need to type Web addresses carefully and accurately, to how to make the tilde (~) symbol using computers keyboards not made in the United States. Some of these tips will be unnecessary for more veteran users of the Internet, although some provide useful reminders, even for those of us who consider ourselves fairly adept at all things technological. Also, most sections contain a small list of frequently asked questions (FAQ), which help the reader solve some of the essential dilemmas that may be encountered when first navigating the Internet. Again, some may be redundant for the experienced user, but all are accurate and appropriate.

The book is organized into five primary sections. The first, called "Guidelines," introduces the reader to the Internet and the tools used with it. Software and communication tools, such as chat and email functions, are discussed, as well as some guiding principles for searching for and utilizing information on the World Wide Web. This section is indispensable for the techno-novice, as it walks the learner through these applications step by step. One of the more appealing, and unique, elements of this section is that it takes the learner through a comprehensive study of the elements in question. Not only does Dudeney tell us how to send and receive e-mail, but he also explains how the whole electronic mail system works, starting with the service provider. While many foreign language teachers are already capable of carrying out the minimal e-mail- and Web-related functions, we could all benefit from the Netiquette reminders included in this section (and referred to at <http://www.fau.edu/netiquette/net>). Further, the suggestions for searching for and evaluating Web resources are of invaluable assistance to anyone who has perused the Web in an attempt to find something "good" for class but was overwhelmed by the vast quantity and varying quality of materials available.

The section called "Activities" could just as well be titled "A Seemingly Unending Supply of Excellent and Innovative Ways to Use the Internet in My Class." This section provides activity descriptions for all levels of learners from basic introductions to more advanced themes such as news, music, and media, the environment, weather, marketing, and art, to name just a few. (The activities are all described and developed in English.) The descriptions walk the reader step by step through the implementation of each activity, from preparation to online tasks and offline tasks, to the concluding elements. They also provide possible variations and many include sample worksheets to use with the activity.

For the more adventurous teacher, the next section, "Projects," describes a number of longer-term projects that language teachers can undertake utilizing Internet technologies. Some of the ideas presented here may not be new, such as e-mail pen pals ("key pals"), though Dudeney provides useful tips for finding and contacting reliable partner institutions to work with. Other project ideas are more innovative, providing instructions for creating Web pages to publish student work and even giving basic HTML code instructions. There are multiple possibilities once the teacher begins investigating student-publishing projects, and this section offers a superb start to getting involved in such projects.

The fourth section is called "Advanced Net." This section introduces the reader to some of the more advanced uses of the Internet available to language teachers, and thus is appropriate to anyone interested in pursuing technological activities, regardless of previous experience. Here Dudeney describes uses such as listservs, browser caches, chats, and multimedia. The chapter begins with a discussion of plug-ins and other browser enhancements that are of special interest to those looking to incorporate audio and visual input for their students. Then listservs and chat programs are described and analyzed for their language classroom potential. Although the least informative (and shortest) section of the book, this chapter gives those with more advanced technological experience something to think about.

Finally, the concluding section of the book is the general FAQ section, which alone would be worth the cost of the book. There is enough reference material in this one section to make even the novice feel comfortable. As with the rest of the book, it begins with the basics: how to connect to the Internet. From there, though, it provides invaluable information. The second part presents Internet terminology. Aside from impressing one's colleagues, this section enables clear understanding of the basic jargon and acronyms commonly used today. Six pages of Website references follow, organized by category (teaching sites, museums, news, etc.). Of course, for the teacher who wants to do his/her own Internet searching, Dudeney provides a Website Evaluation form, which I've used in class with my grad students and found to be quite helpful at separating the reliable from the unreliable sites. Lastly, there is a sample form for obtaining student permission to publish their material on the Internet, something most universities require in one form or another.

Overall, this book is an excellent resource and, as the series title implies, a must-have handbook to guide all teachers interested in incorporating technology into their language classes. There are a few potential drawbacks with the book, and while they certainly do not detract from the volume's value, they should be considered. To begin with, having been published in 2000, some of the material in the book is by now dated; such is the nature of ever-developing technology. However, the principles and ideas remain valid, so the reader is simply advised to consult more up-to-date materials as well. Of course, the author was well aware of this potential problem, given the nature of the Internet, and there is a companion Web site with updates and changes at <http://www.cambridge.org/elt/chlt/internet>. Another potential detraction is that the book is geared for learners of English as a foreign or second language. Again, this does not take away from the value of the material, although teachers of other languages will have to make the effort to find their own, language-specific, Web sites and will have to reorganize the activities with target-language instructions, and so forth. In my opinion, this is a minor price to pay for the wealth of ideas offered, but it is something to be aware of. Finally, as a general caveat, no Web site is guaranteed to be always available and no Web site is guaranteed to look today like it did yesterday. Anyone who has sent a class of learners to a particular site to find only that it has crashed or that the feature piece one was going to work with has changed knows that heart-stopping feeling when one has to figure out in 4 seconds or less what to do for the next half hour. The activities described in the second section are based entirely around one particular Web site, which 9 times out of 10 will not be a problem. But the savvy teacher should be prepared with a backup site that would serve the same purpose, or at least a backup activity for the occasional technological glitch.

In conclusion, this is an invaluable resource to language teachers of all levels and all languages. All teachers will benefit from the activities and project ideas, as well as from the resources given. Novices to technology should read the first "Guidelines" section while sitting at their computer to take full advantage of the hands-on approach. The text would also be perfect for an introductory course on technology in language education, and would provide excellent accompaniment to a traditional teacher training/methodology course. Again, though, all teachers of all levels and all languages will benefit from having this volume sitting on their desk.

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### **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

Gillian Lord is an Assistant Professor at University of Florida in the department of Romance Languages and Literatures. Her research focuses on SLA and L2 phonology, and also on technology in foreign language education.

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