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978-0-521-66742-5 - Network-based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice

Edited by Mark Warschauer and Richard Kern

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Network-based
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Series editors' preface

For many second and foreign language learners, experience of the target language has traditionally been limited to opportunities created by the teacher in the classroom, drawing on such resources as textbooks, tapes or CDs, and videos. In recent years alternative modes of delivery in teaching have been developed such as distance learning and self-access learning, seeking on the one hand to economize on teaching resources, and on the other to recognize principles of learner-centeredness in teaching. However, perhaps the most dramatic changes in the mode in which second language teaching and learning is accomplished have come about as a result of developments in computer-based teaching and learning. The Internet in particular has become a new medium of communication that is shaping both the processes and the products of communication. Because computers have opened up new opportunities for communication between both learners and teachers and among second language users themselves, many language teachers see great potential in computer-mediated teaching and learning. The present book offers a comprehensive account of teaching that makes use of computers connected to one another in either local or global networks, network-based language teaching.

Although a number of recent books provide an overview of developments in computer-mediated language teaching, the present book has a wider agenda. It presents not only descriptive accounts of network-based language teaching in a variety of foreign and second language teaching contexts, but also careful empirical investigations of the nature and effects of such innovations. These studies seek to establish whether network-based language teaching is compatible with educational theory as well as current understanding of the nature of second language acquisition.

Among the range of issues explored in the book are the nature of the interaction and discourse that occurs during computer-mediated communication, the use of technology-mediated activities in a literature-based curriculum and their impact on classroom processes and discourse, ethnographic study of on-line learning in college language and writing classrooms, L2 learners' use of style shifting during electronic conferencing, the role of the computer in fostering improvement in students'

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writing, the development of second language competencies and skills through the Web, and the impact of this new mode of learning on the beliefs of teachers and learners.

The book thus provides a valuable addition to the Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series, through clarifying the nature of network-based language teaching, illustrating the diverse range of potential applications of this new technology, and identifying significant research issues and implications.

Michael H. Long
Jack C. Richards

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Preface

The rapidly expanding use of computer networking in many parts of the world is transforming the way we communicate with each other, conduct business, and produce knowledge. In the context of language education, computer networks make it possible for learners to access and/or publish texts and multimedia materials and to extend their communicative experience to worlds far beyond the classroom. These possibilities have led to great expectations of how computer networks will enhance language learning. Historically, however, educators' expectations of how new technologies may transform learning have not necessarily been borne out in practice. This book offers an initial step forward evaluating educators' expectations about computer networking by presenting recent research on what happens when language learners are brought together with texts and with other speakers of a language in networked environments.

This book originated when the two of us first met at the National Foreign Language Resource Center Symposium on Local and Global Electronic Networking in Foreign Language Learning and Research at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in July 1995. At the time it struck us that the field was long on pedagogical suggestions for exploiting networking technology but short on research. Despite a growing body of general research on computer-mediated communication, relatively few studies have been published that deal specifically with second language learning contexts. This book attempts to fill that void by bringing together in one volume the best current research on language learning using computer networks.

We have done our best to identify the main issues deserving of study in this area and to include contributions that cover this spectrum of issues. We have sought out research studies that are systematic in design and that have results of importance for applied linguistics and language pedagogy. Readers of this book will not find a simple overriding answer as to whether or not teaching with computers “works.” Instead, they will find careful research as to what types of processes and outcomes are achieved when language learners use computer networks in particular circumstances, and what implications this has for how we might design

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and implement network-based language teaching according to particular pedagogical goals.

Any such book is a collaborative effort. As editors, we are especially grateful to the authors whose work appears in this collection. Their patience, perseverance, and willingness to revise and coordinate their chapters deserve special recognition. We are also grateful to the editorial staff at Cambridge University Press, especially Deborah Goldblatt, Mary Vaughn, and Mary Carson, for their professional work on the manuscript. We thank Mike Long and Jack Richards for recognizing the importance of the topic and helping to bring this book into the Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series. We would also like to acknowledge the University of Hawaii and the University of California, Berkeley, for their support of our research. Finally, we thank our families, Mark's wife, Keiko Hirata, and Richard's wife and daughters, Louise Erickson and Maria and Olivia Kern, for their love and support during the several years when we were planning, writing, revising, and editing this book.

Mark Warschauer
Richard Kern