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Elizabeth Hanson-Smith (1997) *Technology in the Classroom: Practice and Promise in the 21st Century* TESOL Professional Papers #2 Virginia, USA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. 25 pages.

In this short publication, Hanson-Smith discusses the possibilities and implications of using technology for language instruction. A glossary of terms, a list of references and a list of Internet sites can be found, at the back of this booklet.

She observes that the rapid increase in the use of the silicon chip has brought about a digital revolution during the second half of the 20th century. As a result, radical changes are taking place. She compares this with the introduction of the printing press which changed the way people spent their free time, opened up education to large numbers of people, created the middle class, introduced new forms of literature, and hastened both religious and political change. Today, technology is currently changing the way we spend our free time. It is making information accessible to the individual. Research of news events is facilitated, individuals are linked and opinions can be disseminated globally in seconds. Possible changes are predicted with regard to elections, legislature and e-cash. Problems exist but it is envisaged that these will be overcome as computers become easier to use.

With regard to current practices, Hanson-Smith notes that prevailing trends in language pedagogy coincide with developments in technology. In particular she mentions how the computer aids the teaching of composition as process. The word processor facilitates revisions and multiple drafts, grammar checkers may be customised by teachers, and on-line groups can perform peer editing of drafts. This has many advantages over traditional paper methods.

Hanson-Smith maintains that multimedia can cater for the multiple learning preferences and styles of individuals. New technology now offers text-to-speech and speech recognition and enables interactive distance learning. The term CD-ROM has become almost synonymous with multimedia, but an alternative to the CD-ROM is storage on Internet. This latter requires only network computers for access. Nevertheless a lack of multimedia pedagogy is noted. Media aspects all too often drive the content. Hanson-Smith considers the frequently used drills approach to be out of date. The student is kept busy and feels safe, but little improvement in real life communication takes place. Computers will not replace teachers but the introduction of technology can contribute to the possibility for individuals to use the learning styles that they prefer.

Next, Hanson-Smith discusses authentic language and content-based learning. Two areas where the computer may be used to enhance learning are internet exchanges and simulations. There are sites specifically created for ESL learners' internet exchanges. These include bulletin boards and "live"

chat areas. Computers are also particularly well adapted for handling simulations. These may be played by email or on the World Wide Web. In such situations the computer takes on the role of a facilitator or stimulator.

Technology, it appears, also facilitates collaborative and task-based learning. Learners can help each other to accomplish a task. This involves authentic communication. Furthermore, technology makes task-based learning exciting by enabling professional looking presentation or publication on World Wide Web. Via the Internet, collaborative tasks become possible on a global scale with joint curriculum projects and collaborative newsletters or websites.

Hanson-Smith perceives a movement towards cognitivist and constructivist approaches to learning language for academic purposes. The computer can provide students with a means to control their own learning, to construct meaning, and to evaluate and monitor their own performance. Teachers normally need to guide students through computer based materials and provide supplementary language practice. The Internet provides a way to expand the four walls of the classroom globally to access many kinds of data. Internet. communication demands student engagement in authentic encounters that would scarcely be possible face-to-face. It is necessary for the teacher to help students carefully plan and organise such learning experiences.

Hanson-Smith concludes by taking a look into the future. She notes that computer technology is advancing at a fast rate and suggests that in the future a learning centre may contain many kinds of machines and activities. Use of technology in the classroom is dependant on training teachers in these resources. Advances in technology will, thus, demand new kinds of student-teacher relations.

A number of requisite areas of research emerge from Hanson-Smith's discussion. The relationship between technological advance and pedagogical theory is in a constant state of flux and there is, therefore, a constant need for investigation of developments within this relationship. The recent emergence of multimedia has led to a need for pedagogical research grounding the use of multisensory learning. The way that technology effects writing protocols, for both solitary and collaborative writing is another area requiring investigation. In fact the whole area of collaborative learning in relation to technology is a subject for inquiry. There is scope for the exploration of learner attitudes to technological features in relation to preferred learning styles. Last but not least, advances in technology inevitably lead to a need for training for teachers and investigation into how this need is to best be met is urgent.

Classroom teachers who are struggling to catch up and keep up with new computer based products and their uses, may find this book a useful introduction.

*Jon Mills*