

New Technologies in Language Learning

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Arne Zettersten

Pergamon Press

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Preface

This survey of the use of new technologies in language learning is directed to anyone interested in new aspects of language acquisition, teachers, students, language planners, prospective writers of software, parents, administrators or those concerned with the future of education.

Writing a book on new technologies in education requires up-to-date information and good advice from numerous sources. I have been fortunate enough to obtain both from universities, libraries, publishers, colleagues and friends.

For useful information and advice I am indebted to John Trim and Eric Brown, Centre for Information on Language Teaching, London, Martin Phillips, British Council, London, Graham Davies, Ealing College, Tim Johns, University of Birmingham, Randall Jones, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Earl Rand and Michael Cohen, University of California, Los Angeles, Udo Jung, University of Marburg, Bengt Sigurd, University of Lund, Mats Jacobson, Studentlitteratur AB, Lund, Claus Færch, English Department, University of Copenhagen, Margareta Broberg, Danmarks Pædagogiske Bibliotek, Copenhagen, and Morten Jønsson, Audio-Visual Department, University of Copenhagen.

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Chapter 1

Can our present language
training methods be improved on?
Views on the future

The main purpose of this book is to give practical examples of how the newest technologies can be utilized in language learning. It is quite obvious that modern technology has developed very fast in recent years. At the same time it is quite amazing how slow educationalists have been in exploiting the capabilities of modern technology. One typical example is the rapid expansion of the microcomputer industry in the late seventies and early eighties compared to the slow advance of educational programs based on microcomputers (homecomputers).

Mainframe computers and minicomputers have admittedly been used a great deal for numerous educational purposes, but when the microchip revolution occurred and homecomputers started to inundate the market in many countries, teachers and educational theorists did not react with enough imagination and enthusiasm.

As in the case of the video boom of the seventies, young people took an enormous interest in the new technological gadgets but did not use them for educational purposes, simply because no-one gave them the opportunity to do so. Renting video films and playing video games became immensely popular in the seventies and continues to be so, just as using homecomputers for computer games became an obsession with many young people a little later in the seventies and in the eighties. The software production in the educational field is far from comparable to the hardware expansion. It is hoped that this book will help to close the gap between the technologically feasible and the educationally desirable, and will aid in effecting the enhancement of modern language learning through the appropriate use of the newest information and communication technologies.

Since I have used a variety of technologies for language training and