

## All You Need Is on the Internet: Using French Public Sites for Teaching Real-Life Language Use

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### Abstract

"A language," said the German philosopher Alexander von Humboldt, "cannot be taught. One can only create conditions for learning to take place" [1]. Today, computer technology and the Internet provide dynamic teaching and learning conditions that enable language learners to interact with real people across the world, have individual access to a variety of meaningful authentic sources, and develop critical analysis, and scientific inquiry. According to Smith "computer technology can provide students with the means to control [their] learning, to construct meaning and to evaluate and monitor their performance" [2]. The Internet gives the opportunity to learn useful sociocultural facts, develop computer skills [3], and use more complex language through exposure to a variety of speech discourse in the target language.

Focusing on the uses of computer technology for language learning, Task-Based Language Teaching principles, and language acquisition theories such as emergentism, in which learners use contextual cues to decode and learn language adapted to their immediate, individual use, this paper aims at demonstrating how authentic internet sites, developed originally for French people (vs. French language learners) can be used for real-life, meaningful learning conditions and tasks.

For this project, 12 internet-based authentic tasks were assigned to 15 elementary French language students at the University of Tehran in Iran. For performing these tasks, learners had to use various search engines and authentic sites, working simultaneously on their reading and writing proficiencies, socio-cultural and pragmatic competencies, and life skills such as planning, searching, creating, manipulating and using information for performing everyday tasks, like opening a boutique in Paris's Champs Elysées avenue or writing the storyline for a youth comics contest. In addition, three questionnaires were administered to students before, in the middle and after the course, in which they expressed their attitude towards the use of the Internet for language learning, as well as how class tasks helped improve their language learning and language-use.

Learners' performances on the tasks, and their responses to the questionnaires indicated a positive attitude towards the use of authentic internet-based tasks at the end of the course, as opposed to a neutral or negative attitude at the beginning. In addition, learners demonstrated remarkable improvements in their lexical competency (through exposure and use of dynamic lexicon available at various sites), reading (scanning authentic texts for directed objectives), writing (expressing individual ideas), creativity, sociocultural competencies (understanding the French culture and practical know-hows), and their savoir-faire or ability to activate and use information for completing the projects, therefore, becoming language learners, and lifelong language users.

### References

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