



New Media in Language Learning and Teaching

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Despite the ubiquity of the so-called new media in business life, the extent to which they are employed in the service of language teaching and learning varies greatly. This presentation looks at developments and research in the field of CALL (computer-assisted language learning) since the introduction of second generation Internet-based applications (Web 2.0). It discusses possible rationales for implementation, ranging from the motivation to extend the classroom by facilitating anytime, anyplace, individualised access to material resources and native speakers, to context-specific reasons, with tutorial technologies being used to address previously identified learner needs. Integration into language courses accordingly takes any number of forms, encompassing in-class use as well as blended and distance learning environments.

After this general discussion of where language teachers, researchers and developers see the potential of new media, I will turn to the users' perspective. I will present the results of two empirical studies I conducted into university students' perceptions of two very different learning tools they have at their disposal. The first one is an e-learning platform that was developed in-house to accompany and complement face-to-face classes, which contains extensive opportunities for individualised and structured language practice, and thus constitutes a traditional CALL environment. On the other hand, I was interested in students' opinions on informal learning opportunities, in particular whether the use of social media applications such as chats or blogs had the potential to enhance their foreign language skills, and investigated where they saw the strengths and weaknesses of online communication compared to face-to-face interaction. The results of these two studies give an insight into today's students' – all of them 'digital natives' – views on new media in language learning.