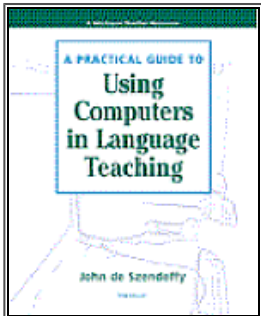


## *A Practical Guide to Using Computers in Language Teaching*

<b>Author:</b>	John de Szendeffy (2005)		
<b>Publisher:</b>	University of Michigan Press		
<b>Pages</b>	<b>ISBN</b>	<b>Price</b>	
xv +272	0472030485	\$29.95 U.S.	

*"Computers are playing an increasingly important role in second and foreign language instruction" (p. 3).*

Language teaching has evolved along different lines in the last 25 years. The following partial list of incremental changes are so significant it is hard to remember what a second- or foreign-language class was like just three decades ago: (1) the number of second language acquisition theories; (2) the use of materials; (3) the approaches to motivation; (4) the use of ITC; (5) the growing number of professional Internet journals on language teaching (*ESP World*, *ESL Online Journal*, or *TESL EJ* itself, to mention only some).

Many teachers consider incorporating the latest resources—language techniques, new materials, and computers (Almekhlafi, 2006; Coniam, 2004) and the Internet (Linder, 2004)—in their classes worldwide. But there are still some who, due to their limited interest or user headaches (or even beliefs about technology), have not been able to foresee the immense potential of computers in their classes. In the last decade, books such as *Using the Internet* (Clarke, 2000) or *CALL* (Levy, 1997) have tried to provide practising teachers with ideas and recipes to use in their classes and lessons, such as project work (Beckett and Slater, 2005) or the quite new integration of corpora in language teaching (Kahur and Hegelheimer, 2005). Some of these books have proved to be valuable sources of ideas for classroom activities. However, very few have addressed the role of computers in the full process of language teaching, including theory, usability, activities, materials design and more. *A Practical Guide to Using Computers*

*in Language Teaching* has such an extensive reach, as one can readily see by scanning the overview below:

<b>Part: chapter</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Notes/Comments</b>
Part 1: 1	The wonders of CALL	
2	Intro to computers and their use	Concise and to the point
3	Recommendations for teachers with limited experience with CALL	Readers may be attracted to the author's humanistic approach and sympathy for teachers fearful of using ICT in language teaching.
Part 2: 4	Writing activities	Among many types are text formatting (p. 36); story starters (p. 44); interviews (p. 45)
5	Traditional motivational activities integrated with CALL	Postcards (p. 60); letters (p. 64); keypals, aka penpals (p. 65); the appeal here is to teachers used to pen-and-paper activities
6	Audio/video activities (p. 95)	Mostly for teachers willing to create their own materials for group and individual activities (p. 96)
7	Group activities (p. 117)	Projects using video, publishing software and PowerPoint; survey projects; the author provides brief descriptions and instructions of software used with Windows and Linux
8	Early computer-assisted tasks	Concordances; surveys; researching on the Internet
9	Content-based L2 LT & LL	The author provides an extensive list of commercial/author designed programs according to the most significant activities/applications in CALL, like business meetings or encyclopedias
	Platform &	Objective assessment of technical

Part 3: 10	computer compatibility	considerations, e.g., alternatives to Windows
Part 4:		Practical issues rarely covered in similar books
Appendix A	Glossary of terms	
B	Using files	
C	Personal netiquette	
D	Using web browsers	
E	Web authoring	
F	Fair use guidelines for educational media	
G	Legal issues: permission for use	
H	Selected CALL resources	In addition to those in end-of-chapter resource/reference lists, all of which the author explains in terms of specific activities

If readers look at the book in depth, they can easily see that de Szendeffy has not planned this book to be just a resource book but, instead, a way of " [teachers] integrating computers into their classrooms", as he states on the back cover. This can be very helpful, as the use of computers in language teaching is a constructivist activity that requires a significant change in the orientation of both teachers and students: the latter because it is the students who need to scaffold their computer and language knowledge based on their own practice; and the teachers because they become the facilitators to provide the access to that knowledge. The author's willingness to help implement classroom computer use is also emphasized throughout the book by two main features: continuously addressing teachers' needs and providing frequent easy-to-understand and valid pedagogic background explanations. Both are usually placed at the beginning of the chapter although there are teaching-formative notes everywhere in the book.

A major asset of *A Practical Guide to Using Computers* is the flexibility it provides a teacher: chapters and activities are both discrete and inter-related. Each teacher can select what she uses, and how she uses the book, according to her students' level of computer literacy.

Though an excellent piece of work, there are a few failings important enough to

mention. The book seems to have been specifically tailored for an American readership. Such apparent customising could have been prompted by the difficulty of getting American university press books in Europe or Africa. But a concrete sign of it is the absence of mentions of EUROCALL or IATEFL CALL groups and activities. This would be a minor oversight but stimulating projects in computer related issues such as webquesting or CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) also get no mention, forcing the reader to consult other sources. A mixed blessing are the extensive instructions de Szendeffy provides before each activity—helpful for teachers new to computers but distracting, even tiring, for the computer literate teacher. The setup is also confusing at times, as there are few organising diagrams (compared, for instance, with the OUP resource books for teachers).

Anyway, that the drawbacks I note are few only emphasizes the great potential of this interesting, well-conceived and carefully written book. It will be very useful for language teachers beginning CALL. ESL/EFL teachers wanting to expand using computers in their language classes could also benefit from de Szendeffy's book.

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