



## FEATURED THEME: TECHNOLOGY

### The case for banned technology in the language classroom

by Dennie Hoopingarner

“Email is for old people.” This is the conventional wisdom among students at my university. Many of us “old people,” who remember inter-office memos reproduced on a hand-cranked machine and printed in purple ink, receive that statement with some amusement that a technology as “new” as email would be considered obsolete. Others, perhaps having just mastered email, are dismayed that our students are turning up their noses at what we consider to be the state of the art in communication. Some might also be discouraged, conclude that their efforts to stay current with technology are futile, and might be tempted to throw up their hands and say, “what’s the use?” However, if we understand what technology students are using—and how they are using it—some interesting implications for language teaching emerge.

The main reason that email has lost its appeal for today’s students is that it is too slow. Users want instant results from their communication technologies, and although email messages are delivered directly to the recipient’s inbox, the sender has no way of knowing whether the message has been received or read, and when, if ever, a reply will arrive. Email does not provide the instant gratification that students demand. Does this lack of patience reflect a character flaw in our students, or is it a reflection of a more fundamental difference between our generation and theirs? There is a claim that the current generation of students has been profoundly affected by the technology in their lives, to the point where their brains are physically different.

Marc Prensky’s (2001a) hypothesis about the latest generation of technology users claims that people who grow up using technology are qualitatively different from those who are introduced to technology later in life. Not only do they have a greater level of comfort in using technology, and expect to use it in more aspects of their daily lives, but more importantly, they use vastly different information processing strategies. Prensky claims that they are better at multi-tasking and parallel processing, able to do many things simultaneously. They also prefer to access their information in hypertext environments that provide rich, connected input. Prensky (2001b) sites neurological evidence that these differences are not only a matter of preference, but reflect structural changes in the way the brain works. The hypothesis is that using technology changes the way that

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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,


We are constantly hearing requests to turn off our cell phones—in the movie theater, in a hospital waiting room, in restaurants, and perhaps you've found the need to remind your students that the classroom is not an appropriate place for cell phones. But maybe cell phones do have a place in the language classroom. This issue's main article makes a case for using this ubiquitous technology in the classroom—you may be surprised to learn how you can adapt cell technologies that your students are already using regularly.

Speaking of technology, this issue also includes previews of the six summer workshops CLEAR is offering in July 2008. Several are technology-related, from a "Tech Up Your Classroom" class for those who need a boost in using basic technology tools to more advanced classes on Rich Internet Applications and taking advantage of technology in creating

assessments. We are also offering a workshop on language program development and another on communicative speaking activities. Learn more about all of our workshops on pp. 4-5.

Also in this issue are announcements on new CLEAR products and initiatives, and a helpful resource for foreign language teachers with special needs students.

We hope to meet some of you at the various spring conferences we attend (see listing p. 7), and we would love to welcome you to campus for a summer workshop or two this July!



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### SUBMISSIONS WANTED!

*CLEAR News* is published twice a year, and each issue reaches thousands of foreign language educators, both in hard copy and on CLEAR's website. If you have an article, a teaching idea, or a materials review that you would like to submit for possible publication, send an electronic copy of your submission to CLEAR.

#### SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

**Main Article**—An article related to current research or foreign language teaching issues. (1000–1500 words)

**The Idea Corner**—A unique activity or teaching idea for foreign language teachers. Must be adaptable for multiple languages. (500–600 words)

**Book/Materials Profile**—Share your best finds with colleagues by telling us about a favorite text, website, CD-ROM, or other teaching materials. (100–200 words)

**Featured Teacher**—Have you benefited in some way from a CLEAR workshop or product? Contact Joy Campbell for information on becoming our featured teacher in a future issue!

The deadline for submissions for the Fall 2008 *CLEAR News* is July 18, 2008. Submissions should be sent to Joy Campbell at:

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The U.S. Department of Education awards grants through Title VI funding to a small number of institutions for the purpose of establishing, strengthening, and operating language resource and training centers to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages. There are currently fifteen Language Resource Centers nationwide: the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research (CALPER) at The Pennsylvania State University; the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota; the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon; the Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University; the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona; the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR) at Michigan State University; the Language Acquisition Resource

Center (LARC) at San Diego State University; the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC) at the University of Wisconsin—Madison; the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC), a consortium of Georgetown University, the Center for Applied Linguistics, and George Washington University; the National East Asian Languages National Resource Center (NEALRC) at The Ohio State University; the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa; the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NK-12LRC) at Iowa State University; the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC), a consortium of UCLA and the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching; the National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC) at Brigham Young University; and the South Asia Language Resource Center (SALRC) at The University of Chicago.

information is represented and processed. These changes vary in both positive and negative ways from non-technical users, but the main point is that there is a significant difference.

Prensky makes the distinction between what he calls “digital natives” and “digital immigrants.” Digital natives are the generation of students who grew up with technology as an integral part of their lives. For them, technology is a part of the environment. They often don’t even realize that it’s there. Digital immigrants, however, have had to adapt to technology. Since the various technologies are new to them, they see it through a filter of how the world worked before the technology was available. The term “horseless carriage” is an example of such a filter.

Language teachers can appreciate the distinction between natives and immigrants in terms of language. Language acquisition theory has long made the distinction between native and nonnative speakers of a language. There is typically a clear and measurable difference in the way native and nonnative speakers use a language. The ability to acquire a language to a native-like level also seems to decrease for older learners. White’s (2003) review of the state of second language acquisition theory concludes that “it is clear that [second language] acquisition differs in a variety of respects from [first language] acquisition and that interlanguage grammars diverge from native-language grammars more often than not” (p. 269).

Prensky’s hypothesis makes sense when seen as a corollary to language learning. We can typically distinguish between native and nonnative speakers of a language, and there is strong evidence that early exposure to language typically results in higher levels of attainment (see Birdsong 2006, Singleton & Lengyel 1995 and Singleton 2005 for summaries of this issue). It might be helpful to see today’s students as native speakers of technology, while we are nonnative speakers. It thus seems reasonable that earlier exposure to technology, at the very least, can affect attitudes toward using technology, and possibly also create physiological changes in the way the brain works. And although adult learners of a language typically never attain native-like proficiency, they nevertheless can attain high levels of functional proficiency. In the same way, even technology nonnative speakers (Prensky’s “digital immigrants”) can learn a great deal, and become at least functionally literate in new technologies.

If we want to address the learning styles and educational needs of our students, it is important that we understand how

technology influences their everyday lives. We can begin by following up on the opening statement of this article. If email is for old people, what’s for young people? If students disdain email, what has replaced it? What technologies are students using, and how can we as teachers harness their habits and learning styles to help them be better language learners?

When we observe students in their natural habitat (that is, outside the classroom), we readily see their technology of choice. It’s not hard to see the attraction. It’s easy to use, portable, powerful and getting more so, and interfaces with the Internet in unique ways. On college campuses, high schools and middle schools, even in elementary schools, I have seen the future of technology-based learning. Students carry it with them wherever they go, and use it as often as they can, regardless of where they are. More and more new applications are being developed for it, many taking advantage of its unique abilities. It works almost anywhere, too. What is it? It’s the cell phone.

According to the latest report from CTIA, the association for the wireless telecommunication industry, the cell phone penetration rate in the US is 82.4% (you can read a summary of this report online: [http://files.ctia.org/pdf/CTIA\\_Survey\\_Mid\\_Year\\_2007.pdf](http://files.ctia.org/pdf/CTIA_Survey_Mid_Year_2007.pdf)). As a comparison, the Internet penetration rate for the country is lower, at 70.9%, according to a 2008 study by the Miniwatts Marketing Group (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>). The numbers are clear: many more people have cell phones than are on the Internet. And lest you think that the US is on the forefront of this trend, in fact, the US lags behind many countries. Thirty countries have a cell phone penetration rate of over 100%, meaning that in some areas of the world, such as many countries in the European Union, there are more cell phones than there are human beings. One estimate is that the worldwide penetration rate will reach 100% within five years.

The *Washington Post* reports on a survey taken of teen cell phone users by Disney Mobile, in which 44% of cell phone users claim that text messaging is their primary form of communication ([http://blog.washingtonpost.com/posttech/2007/07/teen\\_cell\\_phone\\_usage\\_soars\\_in.html](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/posttech/2007/07/teen_cell_phone_usage_soars_in.html)), and over a quarter of them report that they send a text message within ten minutes of waking up in the morning. In addition, the teens report being on the phone more than two hours every day, except during the summer, when the usage jumps to almost four hours a day. Clearly, the cell phone is the technology of choice for today’s students.

## 2008 Summer Workshops

CLEAR has offered summer professional development workshops for over ten years. Teachers of all levels have come to Michigan State University's campus for these informative, hands-on courses. Take advantage of this great professional development opportunity and meet foreign language educators from all over the country. Visit our website for more information about the workshops, discounts, and registration. We hope to see you this July for one (or more) of our six workshops!

### 1 Making the Most of Video in the Foreign Language Classroom

July 10-12

*Presenter: Eve Zyzik, Asst. Professor in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, Michigan State University*

Teachers and researchers agree that video materials can enhance the learning environment in foreign language classrooms by providing rich, contextualized input. The combination of aural and visual cues naturally makes video input more comprehensible. However, there are several uses of video that extend beyond listening comprehension activities. For example, video can be effectively used to teach grammar and in promoting output (both oral and written). This workshop will consider multiple uses of video as well as techniques for adapting authentic materials to learners of various proficiency levels.

The workshop will address the following topics:

- Listening comprehension processes
- Choosing appropriate video materials (authentic versus scripted video materials)
- Sequencing a lesson with video (pre-viewing, during viewing, post-viewing)
- Top-down and bottom-up activities for each stage of working with video
- Video without sound
- Video to teach grammar
- Video to promote output
- Video to teach culture
- DVD with subtitles and captions

### 2 Tech Up Your Classroom: Enhancing Your Foreign Language Classroom with Technology

July 14-16

*Presenter: Senta Goertler, Asst. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University*

We use technology in our everyday lives, and so do our students. Why not use it for teaching? Technology can help make the language classroom more efficient, more authentic, more learner-centered, and it addresses different learning styles. In this workshop, we will discuss simple ways of "teaching up" your classroom through the use of chats, message boards, blogs, wikis, videos, web quests, course management systems, Microsoft Office software, the Internet in general, and various free CLEAR products. You will get to experience activities from the learner's perspective and develop and share your own activities. The goal of the class is to help you use technology effectively for your own teaching, your administrative tasks, and your professional development, including potential action research projects.

### 3 Next-Generation Tools for Language Teaching: Rich Internet Applications for the Classroom

July 17-19

*Presenter: Dennie Hoopingarner, Assoc. Director for Technology Implementation at CLEAR*

Technology never stops advancing. Just when you thought you knew it all, along comes something new! Web 2.0 is all about interactivity, which is a perfect fit for language learning. Learn how to use CLEAR's free new tools for creating interactive web-based multimedia, without having to program, download, or upload anything. This set of tools can be used with any language, any textbook, and any level. Learn how to make web pages where your students can record audio files that are automatically uploaded to your virtual dropbox. Make a "mashup" that combines your text, pictures, video, and interactive language exercises into one web page. Create virtual conversations for your students where they listen to questions, and the program captures their responses automatically. All of these functions are available to you from within a web browser, with no special hardware or software needed. Come and experience the next generation of web-based language teaching!

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## 4 Designing Online Language Teaching Materials with an Accompanying Online Assessment Portfolio

July 21-23

*Presenter: Paula Winke, Asst. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University*

The goal of this workshop is for you to create computer-assisted language teaching materials and a complementary online portfolio assessment program specifically for your classes and the language program at your school. This workshop has you use user-friendly, publicly available technology and software that is either extremely low-cost or free. Software we will use includes CLEAR's Rich Internet Applications technology, Audio Portfolios and Hot Potatoes.

This workshop will provide you with the skills to create online assessment activities for reading, writing, listening and speaking. Special emphasis will be placed on aligning these materials with an online assessment portfolio that you can use with your students for formative and self-assessment. At the end of the workshop, you should have eight online tasks for language learning (two each for listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and one online portfolio plan with rubrics drafted. The online assessment activities will incorporate feedback that students can use to develop their language skills. There are no technical prerequisites other than basic familiarity with computers. The workshop will be offered in one of MSU's state-of-the-art computer labs. Bring some of the materials you currently use for teaching to the workshop. We will look at your classroom materials (textbooks, workbooks, and any CDs or DVDs you have) to see what online components and portfolio assessment program would complement them. The workshop is hands-on, individualized, practical, and fun!

## 5 Incorporating Communicative Speaking Activities into the Teaching of Reading, Writing, Grammar, and Vocabulary

July 24-26

*Presenter: Charlene Polio, Assoc. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University*

One concern from teachers and students is that students do not get enough talking time in class. Furthermore, many researchers have argued for the importance of language production in the development of overall language proficiency. This workshop will begin with a framework for developing and evaluating communicative speaking activities. This will then be followed by examples of how to incorporate speaking activities into the teaching of reading and writing. In addition, the participants will observe and develop activities that target specific grammar and vocabulary so that instructors can better supplement their textbooks with communicative speaking tasks. An emphasis will be placed on how to structure activities to get students to talk and to use more advanced language and how to make sure students receive feedback. In the workshop, participants will learn to first evaluate activities by trying them in demonstration lessons. They will then develop similar activities for their specific teaching contexts.

## 6 Language Program Development

July 28-30

*Presenters: Senta Goertler, Asst. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University; Angelika Kraemer, Coordinator of German Outreach Programs in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University*

Do you want to start a Saturday School, an After-School Program, a FLEX Program, a Heritage Language Program, a Language Maintenance Program, a Summer Language Program, or any other language program? Do you already have a program like this or are you a language teacher who wants to "grow" your language program? This is the workshop for you!

In this workshop we will present theoretical and practical issues in program development, program maintenance, program articulation, and program recruitment. We will draw from program administration and second language acquisition research and present our own practical experiences in working with the German for Kids Programs at Michigan State University and the Deutsche Sommerschule am Pazifik (German Summer School of the Pacific). While our experience is based on German, the topics addressed apply to all languages and we will utilize the expertise of the course participants to provide examples for other languages.

### Learn more...

about all of these workshops, including pricing/discount information and application forms, by visiting our website: <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/professionaldev/summerworkshops.php> or just go to <http://clear.msu.edu> and click on "Professional Development."

The \$15 application fee is waived for all applications received on or before the early application deadline of May 9, 2008.

**Regular application deadline: June 2, 2008**

Apply online at: <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/professionaldev/apply.php>. You can also print a PDF application from the website or contact CLEAR to receive an application in the mail.

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At first glance, the cell phone as a computing tool seems like a technological step backward. Compared even to the smallest notebook computer, the cell phone screen is horribly small, the keyboard is barely usable, and the sound quality is terrible. But the attraction of the cell phone is not its value as a computing device. Students care much less about what's "under the hood," instead concentrating on what they can do with the device.

Why should teachers consider the cell phone as a teaching aid? Considering that the technology is this popular and prevalent, and has so many different uses ripe for language teaching, we would be foolish not to take advantage of the technology.

Let's consider one important aspect of the cell phone. Telecommunications devices are social in nature. A cell phone is useless without someone to call or send a text message to. In other words, a cell phone is used for communication. Beginning in the 1960s, we invested tens of thousands of dollars in language labs so that students could talk to each other. Couldn't we achieve the same result by simply having students flip open their cell phones?

But the cell phone is capable of much more than just making phone calls. For example, text messaging has become the replacement for some emails. In addition, cell phones interface well with the popular practice of publishing via web logs, or blogs. Think of a blog as a diary that you share with everyone online. Individuals keep blogs to share their thoughts and activities; organizations also blog to communicate with the public in a way that is more informal than press releases. The educational uses of blogs for language teaching are discussed in Stanley (2005) and Godwin-Jones (2003). Teachers can use blogs to communicate with their students. Students can maintain a blog as a writing exercise, either collectively as a class or individually. There are many free services that will host your blog. Some services, like Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>), allow you to use your cell phone to blog via email or the text messaging service. You can also include photographs in your blog. Cell phones play a role in that activity as well.

Many cell phones also have cameras that take still pictures and short video clips. While not as high quality as digital cameras, pictures taken with cell phone cameras are nevertheless of good enough quality for putting on the web. Photographs can be displayed on the phone itself, be sent to other phones, or be emailed for display on a computer. You can also send pictures from cell phones to online publications like blogs, instantly putting the photo in a web page. Pictures can be very useful prompts for

writing tasks in the language class. For example, a teacher could post a picture to a class blog, and have students write descriptions in the "responses" section of the blog.

Speaking often presents a challenge for language teaching. Giving individual students the opportunity for meaningful speaking practice frequently seems an impossible task, given the time constraints that teachers must deal with. Technology can address this problem in a very useful way. Teachers want to hear students' speech, so an ephemeral telephone call will not solve the problem. However, it's possible to record a telephone call to an audio file that teachers can listen to later. Free services like Gcast (<http://www.gcast.com>) allow you to call a phone number, use a PIN to log in, then record a message in a similar way to leaving a voice mail on an answering machine. The message is converted to an MP3 file, and can then be listened to on a computer, or downloaded to an iPod.

Given the many ways that cell phones can be used to enhance language teaching and learning, and the affinity that students have for their phones, it seems reasonable to take advantage of this ubiquity and enthusiasm to enhance our language classes. Although the use of cell phones is prohibited in many schools, many school administrators indicate their willingness to relax the restriction if a legitimate use can be presented. Some of the ideas offered in this article might help to make the case for the pedagogical use of cell phones in the classroom.

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## Upcoming Conferences

CLEAR will be represented at exhibit booths and/or with personnel at the following conferences this spring. Stop by to introduce yourself and let us show you what we can offer for your language classroom.

- [Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages \(CSCTFL\)](#), March 6-8, 2008, Dearborn, MI
- [Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium \(CALICO\)](#), March 18-22, 2008, San Francisco, CA
- [World Languages Day](#), April 12, 2008, East Lansing, MI
- [National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages \(NCOLCTL\)](#), April 24-27, 2008, Madison, WI

## Partnership with ACTFL

In January and February 2008, CLEAR collaborated with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to manage their student video podcast contest, “Not Just a Language Class!” This contest was part of the *Discover Languages... Discover the World!* (<http://www.discoverlanguages.org>) national public awareness campaign to build public support for language education. Students were asked to create a two-minute video podcast depicting how the study of other languages had an impact on their lives. ACTFL contacted CLEAR and requested that we create an online submission and storage system for the podcast entries based on our Rich Internet Application called Viewpoint. We were able to tailor the contest website to ACTFL's needs, and look forward to future collaboration—watch for this annual contest! (ACTFL is using our Rich Internet Applications... are you? <http://ria.clear.msu.edu>)

## Great Resource for Special Needs Students

Occasionally CLEAR receives requests for information about language teaching and students with disabilities. The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE), in collaboration with Mobility International USA, has published an informative and useful resource sheet entitled “Foreign Languages and Students with Learning, Vision and Hearing Disabilities.” If you have students with special needs, this article is an excellent resource to get you started. It includes tips for both teachers and students, suggestions for further reading, and other useful links. Access this resource sheet at [www.miusa.org/ncde/spotlight/foreignlanguage](http://www.miusa.org/ncde/spotlight/foreignlanguage). Learn more about NCDE and its efforts to engage people with disabilities in a full range of international educational opportunities at <http://www.miusa.org/ncde>, or call 541-343-1284 (Tel/TTY). You can also email [clearinghouse@miusa.org](mailto:clearinghouse@miusa.org).

## New Products

Visit <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/store> for these and other products from CLEAR.

## Celebrating the World's Languages: A Guide to Creating a World Languages Day Event

CLEAR, in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Minnesota, has created a free guidebook for those interested in running a World Languages Day (WLD) event. The guide walks readers through the steps of planning and running this all-day cultural and language awareness event for high school students. Organized chronologically, the guide outlines the steps needed to organize a WLD event, covering every step of the way, from rationale and funding to publicity and registration. Download the detailed 160-page guidebook for free from CLEAR's website.

## Rich Internet Applications

If you aren't already familiar with them, visit our website to learn more about our Rich Internet Applications. The ongoing RIA initiative includes several free online tools for language teachers, including products called *Audio Dropboxes*, *Conversations*, *Viewpoint*, and *Mashups*. We will be presenting on *Rich Internet Applications* at several of the conferences listed above, as well as in our summer workshops.

In cyberspace, an **Audio Dropbox** is a virtual dropbox for audio recordings. Using this new tool, you can put a drop box for speaking assignments on any web page. From within that web page, students record themselves, and their audio files are automatically put into your drop box. You can access your drop box from anywhere and listen to the recordings. Put a drop box on your home page, mashup, wiki, or blog. Using the tool is as easy as copying and pasting. You don't have to upload or download anything, and it works on any computer from anywhere.

**Conversations** is a program that allows teachers to record prompts or questions for their students to answer. The program can be used to simulate conversations, role plays, or for “virtual interviews.” Create a conversation to ask questions and collect responses. Join a conversation to listen to and respond to questions. Students can work in “practice” mode or respond to questions spontaneously.

**Viewpoint** is a video repository that allows you to record your videos online using your webcam, or upload existing videos. These videos can then be linked from other sites or embedded inside your own web pages. Surpassing the functionality of YouTube, Viewpoint lets you add subtitles to your videos.

The term *mashup* refers to the combination of data from one or more web services with customized functionality or data. In the case of CLEAR's **Mashups**, the term refers to the combination of an audio or video clip with a SMILE exercise and additional text. The idea is to combine media elements to create a new resource for language teaching.

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# CLEAR News

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