



SCMC, Blogs, & Wikis

A Manual for Professional Teacher Development

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From the Authors:

We believe the emergence of Internet-mediated professional and social communication necessitates a responsive and proactive vision of educational practice, particularly in the areas of first and additional language instruction. This manual has been designed for use by teachers of advanced foreign language at the secondary and post-secondary level in pre- and in-service professional development workshops and events on the use of Internet communication tools in the foreign language classroom. It is also suitable for use in independent self-study. We recommend that users have access to the Internet and the CALPER website (<http://calper.la.psu.edu>) while using this manual. The case study video and audio clips require QuickTime.

The manual is divided into three sections for each of the three major technologies covered: chat, blogs, and wikis. Each section begins with a scenario of classroom technology use that is designed to provide a context for participant reflection and discussion of concerns. This is followed by discussion of the technology and its application in the classroom, with questions for reflection. There are also 'Consider This' side boxes of related information designed to spur additional discussion. Each section concludes with a case study analysis activity, using multimedia case studies that are available on the CALPER website.

If you are using the manual in pre-service and in-service professional development workshops and events, please credit the authors at the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research and kindly let us know for which event this manual helped you to prepare. This information will make it possible for us to continue to provide this publication at no cost to language educators

Table of Contents:

Preface: Communication Technologies and Foreign Language Education in Contemporary Context.....	5
Consider This: Interesting Internet Facts and Figures.....	5
Part I: Synchronous Computer-mediated Communication.....	6
A. What is SCMC?.....	6
B. What happens during a chat?.....	7
Consider this: SCMC Pedagogical Points.....	8
C. What kinds of activities are suitable for SCMC?.....	8
D. How can SCMC activities focus on language?.....	9
E. SCMC Case Study: <i>Der Bürgermeister ist tot</i> (The Mayor is Dead).....	10
F. SCMC Activity Analysis.....	11
Part II. Blogs.....	12
A. What is a blog?.....	12
Consider This: Quick Information about Blogs.....	13
B. How does a blog work?.....	13
C. Using blogs to traverse time and space.....	14
D. Blog Case Study: Class Biographers.....	15
E. Blog Activity Analysis.....	16
Part III. Wikis.....	17
A. What is a wiki?.....	17
Consider This: Quick Information about Wikipedia.....	18
B. How does a wiki work?.....	18
C. Wiki Case Study: Alma Matters.....	19
D. Wiki Activity Analysis.....	20

Preface: Communication Technologies and Foreign Language Education in Contemporary Context

In the 21st century, much human interaction, from institutional contexts such as government, commerce, and education, to interpersonal communication among friends and family, has become increasingly mediated by technology, whether text, sound, image, or video.

In conjunction with the explosive growth in digital information and communication media, Internet information and communication technologies have created access to wider audiences and enabled more rapid dissemination of information, knowledge and exposure to different cultures. New media technologies also support the emergence of distinctive communicative, cultural, and cognitive practices, which have resulted in qualitative shifts in communicative contexts, purposes, and genres.

Consider This: Interesting Internet facts and figures...¹

Web, YouTube, and blogs

- 100b times a day people click on a web page
- Youtube.com serves over 200m videos daily
- 57 million blogs exist
 - 100,000 new blogs are created daily
 - 1.3 million new blog posts per day

Virtual environments

- Second Life, a popular social and commercial virtual world
 - 7,576,475 'residents'
 - 1,738,915 logged in past 60 days
 - Between 20,000 and 50,000 people typically logged on at a given moment
 - \$1,549,008 spend last 24h

Multi-user online gaming

- World of Warcraft --> 9 million+ players globally
 - 2+ million players in North America
 - 1.5 million players in Europe
 - 3.5 million players in China

Penn State net behaviors survey from Fall 2006

- 1,852 undergrads surveyed
- 93% use Facebook, 62.8% visit dail
- 57.1% have Myspace accounts, 45% visit daily

¹ Demographic data drawn from the Second Life and Blizzard Entertainment websites and from popular press articles in sources such as Wired News, The New York Times, and blogs tracking new media use.

Part I: Synchronous Computer-mediated Communication (SCMC)

This section describes the technical and pedagogical uses of synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC), sometimes called “chat,” in instructed foreign language contexts. To begin, read the following scenario of the use of SCMC in a foreign language classroom and consider how the technology is integrated into the class. What are your concerns about using SCMC in the classroom? How would this scenario be similar to or different from a similar activity that did not involve technology?

An Advanced Spanish Speaking course meets once a week in a technology classroom with computers at every desk arranged in clusters. In this particular class session, some students are sitting individually at computers while others are sitting together in pairs at computers talking and pointing at the screen. Some students have a window open to an online dictionary and others have print dictionaries next to them. The teacher is sitting at a computer typing and reading, but occasionally gets up and circulates looking over students' shoulders at the computers and the chat program they are using. There is occasional laughter and hand raising with questions for the teacher. The 20 students are divided into 4 groups of 4 to 6 participants. Each group is in its own chat room and is brainstorming ideas for a theme their group must write about related to a class project focusing on environmental issues. Once students decide the theme, they need to decide on a product, for example a video, webpage, or podcast, that they will create and present to other classes at the end of the semester. At the end of the session, the transcript of the chat interaction is printed out and distributed to all class members so that they can incorporate the ideas that were generated into the next phase of the project.

A. What is SCMC?

Synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) refers to chat or any instant messaging interaction happening in real time through computers linked by the Internet. Chat can be a stand-alone computer application, such as AOL Instant Messenger (IM), or it may be bundled into a course management system, game or website. Increasingly chat is web-based, which means the user does not need any special software, and can access the chat environment on the Web. Many students raised in the digital generation will have had experiences chatting with friends and family from an early age, often using an instant messaging tool (such as IM). Chatting in classroom activities will seem like second nature to these students. Others may not have had such exposure or inclination.

SCMC or chat ‘culture’ has resulted in particular textual conventions, like abbreviations (e.g. lol – laughing out loud, or brb – be right back), emoticons, or the use of all lower case letters. Since chat conventions are group and language specific, they will vary among users and situations, and of course across languages. For example, in Chinese chat ‘88’ means ‘lol’, since the word for 8 (‘wa’) sounds like laughter. One interesting activity would be to have students research and try to use these conventions as they are practiced in the language they are studying, or to discover them by chatting with native/expert speakers.

I. A. Questions for reflection

1. What experiences do you have with the 'digital generation'? How comfortable are you with technology in comparison to these 'digital natives'? How do you think students' accumulated online experience and expertise could be usefully incorporated into classroom foreign language learning?
2. What experience with SCMC technology such as chat and instant messenger (IM) do you have? Brainstorm and then list out some applications of SCMC technology that you think could further FL learning and teaching.
3. What chat textual conventions are you familiar with, in English or in the target foreign language? What is the function of these conventions – in other words, why do some forms of Internet-mediated language use differ from traditional text-book conventions and norms? In a world that increasingly includes Internet-mediated communication, how might you explicitly teach the kinds of language use that are common to these modalities?

B. What happens during a chat?

Foreign language teachers using chat-based classroom activities have noticed several phenomena related to chat. First, students may initially react with playful, prolific production, or they may say things they'd never dare speak in class. Some students who rarely speak in class may suddenly begin participating more often in SCMC sessions, and those who dominate face-to-face class discussions may no longer be the only ones who talk.

This 'destabilization' of conventional face-to-face classroom interaction patterns can result in more students producing more language, and may help to democratize participation. Second, many teachers have noticed that the more students are in one chat room, the more the discussion tends towards play and off-task behavior, but often in the target language. In addition, students tend to go off task and topic if the task is not well defined and product-oriented.

Because of these phenomena, some teachers have found it useful to establish rules of chat conduct (such as to use the target language as much as possible but to also allow English to keep conversations flowing), to set clear chat tasks and assign group roles, to limit the number of participants in one chat room, and to have students work in pairs and to take turns typing at the keyboard.

I. B. Questions for reflection:

1. What are the benefits or drawbacks of doing an activity in chat rather than face-to-face? When might each be appropriate?
2. When might 'playful' and 'off-task' behaviors be appropriate in the language classroom? How could these tendencies be harnessed for the benefit of language learning?
3. What might be some useful 'rules for chat conduct' in the FL classroom?

Consider This: SCMC Pedagogical Points...

a summary of pedagogical and second language acquisition research on the use of SCMC in foreign language education

SCMC Pedagogical Points: The Good

- Decenters the teacher and makes contribution possible for students
- More risk taking and creative language use
- Increased overall production of language (e.g., Swain's communicative output, 1985)
- Increased complexity of morphosyntactic features
- More discourse functions expressed in comparison to F2F discussion
- Sometimes amplified interpersonal functions of language use
- The graphical nature of interactive written texts may contribute to noticing syntactic features

SCMC Pedagogical Points: The Problematic

- Flaming and uncontrollable behavior (generally attributed to lack of face constraints)
- Sloppy grammar and orthography (attributed to the "communicative urgency" of synchronous CMC)
- No sound, prosody, pronunciation, intonation, or conventional paralinguistics that normally are included in the social-material context of face-to-face interaction

C. What kinds of activities are suitable for SCMC?

Teachers have noticed that because of the above phenomena, SCMC seems to be good for encouraging language production and building learner fluency. Chat seems naturally well-suited for brainstorming, role play, and discussion activities. The open and sometimes chaotic nature of a large group chat can be especially useful for brainstorming, due to the transcript record of the conversation (see below) and activities that benefit from large amounts of language production and where grammatical and orthographic accuracy is less of an immediate concern. In the opening scenario, the brainstorming phase of the project took place in SCMC, an environment that encourages idea generation and language production.

The relative anonymity of chat (even in an intra-class activity) allows for a certain amount of identity play, especially if the technology allows log-in pseudonyms. This makes SCMC suitable for role-play and drama-based activities, where students play their roles through chat, maybe not knowing who in their class is playing their opposite. Because chat destabilizes participation patterns and encourages production, it is especially useful for discussion activities. A discussion activity in a SCMC environment is not much different than a face-to-face equivalent, as it still needs clear objectives, instructions, and usually an assessable product. Discussion topics can be easily based on course content, for example politics, literature, or the environment, and can be structured as an open-ended casual discussion to discuss a reading, or a structured debate as part of the final project of a course unit. Some educators have found that controversial discussion topics can be particularly good for generating enthusiastic and impassioned communication. Examples of various SCMC chat activities are discussed below.

I. C. Questions for reflection:

1. When and at what stage of a larger class project is brainstorming useful as a language learning activity? Even though a brainstorming activity is by nature very free and open, how could such an activity be structured in chat so that there would be an end-product?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of role play as an activity type? How does learning a foreign language involve issues of identity and when might the use of pseudonyms be a constructive choice?
3. What sorts of FL discussion activities have you found effective? What are some challenges in getting students to contribute to discussion?

D. How can SCMC activities focus on language?

The transcripts of any SCMC activity can be archived, copied and pasted into documents by the students or teacher right after the chat session. These documents can then be printed out, e-mailed or posted to a blog, and assessed by the teacher or used for subsequent activities that look at content, vocabulary, or grammatical structures. In this sense, chat becomes a useful tool for the development of language awareness and attention to accuracy and appropriateness. Some researchers have found that even during chat, the bit of extra time that the user has to compose their turn, and the visual-graphical nature of the written medium, can provide them with opportunities to notice qualities about their own production that lead to language development. In addition, a student in chat is also reading what their partners are writing, which can entail noticing the vocabulary and structures others are using as well.

When the student's partner is a native/expert speaker of the target language, the opportunities for noticing and development can be significant, especially if that partner is open to negotiation of meaning, or with an online dictionary handy in another window.

I. D. Questions for reflection:

1. What are the benefits of having students look at their own production immediately after they produce it? How could this be structured as an activity? How could it be used for assessment purposes?
2. How could you use chat transcripts to develop student awareness of language features besides vocabulary and grammar? For example, how about pragmatic features like the use of politeness strategies?
3. Since a chat uses the Internet, it means a student can multi-task with several windows open, including maybe an IM window to an expert speaker or a browser window open to an online dictionary. How do you feel about this?

E. SCMC Case Study: *Der Bürgermeister ist tot* [The Mayor is Dead]

An example of an SCMC intra-class role play activity, The Mayor is Dead, is online at:

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=12>

A German version of this activity is featured as a case study at:

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/casestudy1.php>



The case study offers a project description, sample transcripts, video clips of activity implementation with subtitles, and an interview afterwards with instructor Lisa Hundley of Penn State University. In the activity, students play the parts of various citizens of a town whose mayor was found dead. The FBI agents, which in German is the ‘Kriminalpolizei’, or the ‘Kripo’, must attempt to determine who did it. After reading/viewing the case study, consider the following questions.

1. What did you find interesting about the case study? To what extent do you think it was or was not an effective activity?
2. What pre-activities could prepare students for this role-play task? What sorts of related activities could follow? What kind of content or language-based unit might this activity fit into?
3. How would this activity be different if it were face-to-face?
4. If you could implement this activity, how would you adapt it for your teaching situation?

F. SCMC Activity Analysis

Consider these chat activities from the *CALPER Computer-Mediated Activity Library*. Note that in addition to those listed below, a number of other activities are also available at this site.

What's behind a word? A semantic mapping activity

In this activity, students discuss the cultural and metaphorical associations with general and abstract concepts.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=22>

Help wanted: Interviewing for a new job

In this activity, students act as employers and job candidates, interviewing each other for job ads that they create.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=26>

The United Nations

In this activity, students research the UN and discuss it in chat.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=10>

SCMC: How to Get Started

Chat clients are available as part of courseware packages that many schools have up and running—ask your technology support crew for help. Instant Messenger software is available free from America Online (AIM) and Yahoo (YIM). CALPER hosts a free chat client with archive capabilities for use by any foreign language class at any American educational institution. Visit [<http://calper.la.psu.edu/tools.php>] to get started. All CALPER tools are Unicode-friendly, meaning they support diacritics and non-Western fonts.

Part II. Blogs

This section describes the technical and pedagogical uses of blogs (from ‘web log’) in instructed foreign language contexts. To begin, read the following scenario of the use of blogs in a foreign language classroom and consider how the technology is integrated into the class. What are your concerns about using blogs in the classroom? How would this scenario be similar to or different from a similar activity that did not use technology?

A high-intermediate French class is meeting for its weekly lab session. Students sit at individual computers, each typing and clicking, some reaching for dictionaries, some raising their hands for assistance from the teacher, who is circulating and observing. The homework assignment was to post a blog entry about the movie the class watched recently and discussed over the last few classes. Students were then to post short commentary-responses to each others’ blogs in reply. In the lab session, students are reading the comments their classmates posted on their blogs and preparing to summarize them orally for the class. In the 15 minutes allotted for the activity, a few students are frantically trying to complete their comments, and one is trying to finish the initial assignment. Because posts and comments are date and time stamped, however, the teacher would have a record of when the assignments were submitted.

A. What is a blog?

A blog is an online, semi-public journal that displays serial entries with date and time stamps. It may be embedded in a facebook or myspace page, and may function as an individual’s homepage. Most blogs include a comments feature that allows visitors to post responses. In its short history—the first use of the term blog is reported to have occurred in either 1996 or 1997 and blogging as a populist movement dates only from the turn of the millennium—the rise of blogging as a form of communicative and informational expression has been mercurial. To take one example, LiveJournal (<http://livejournal.com>) reports over 7 million blogs created, approximately 5 million of which have been updated at least once. LiveJournal reports that female-presenting bloggers outnumber users presenting as males by approximately two to one (67.3% vs. 32.7%, respectively). The ages of LiveJournal users span from 13 (35,856 blogs created by this age group) to 55 (1,229). The 15-20 year old age group produces the majority of the blogs on this site, which suggests that the everyday digital literacy practices of current high school and college students differ significantly from those of earlier generations.

II. A. Questions for reflection:

1. What experience do you have with blogs, in and out of the classroom? What could be some applications of this technology to language teaching and learning?
2. What sorts of blogs have you visited online? What are the functional differences between a blog and a discussion board? Between a blog and an online newspaper?
3. What do you think might be some reasons that blogging seems to appeal mostly to younger people? What is the function of social blogging for high school and college aged students and how might you leverage this passion for socially oriented writing for foreign language learning?

Consider This: Quick information about blogs

- Date and time-stamped serial compositions
- Mainstream media as well as grassroots and watchdog news reporting now use blogs
- Blogs now serve as business and commercial information outlets
- Public journaling of one's 'private' life's (or group's) point of view
- Most personal blogs are created by individuals
- Massive popular culture usage among youth (females outnumber males 2 to 1)
- LiveJournal reports the bulk of users in the 15-20 age range (rapid taper after mid-20s)

Uses of blogs in foreign language education

- Public journaling, personal narrative and reporting
- Opinions and reactions to readings
- Responses to questions/topics
- Course portfolio
- Interactivity: Commenting and threaded discussion with text, images, videos, sounds

B. How does a blog work?

To create a blog, an individual sets up a blog account through a publicly available blog host, like *LiveJournal* [<http://www.livejournal.com>] or *blogspot* [<http://www.blogspot.com>]. Increasingly, universities offer free blog hosting to educators and students, and CALPER provides free blogs to foreign language educators and students that are Unicode-compliant, meaning they can support diacritics and non-Roman characters [<http://uniblogs.la.psu.edu>]. The user has a log-in and password and can access his/her blog from any computer with Internet access. To create a post, the user simply fills in a form and 'publishes' it, so that it appears on the blog. She can individualize the look of her blog, post links to other sites, for example news stories or videos, and embed images and videos in a blog posting. Access to the blog can be open to the public, including viewing the posts and commenting, or access can be restricted to certain users or friends, so that not everyone can view and/or leave comments.

II. B. Questions for reflection:

1. What would be the strengths and drawbacks of blogging a journal assignment as opposed to using a traditional paper format?
2. A journal can contain a variety of written assignment types, including pre-writing, reflective, process, and creative writing. How might these assignments be different in an electronic, semi-public format?
3. A blog can combine writing and discussion activities if the commenting feature is active. How would this change the nature of traditional writing activities? To what extent could this feature be used for student peer review of written work?

C. Using blogs to traverse time and space

Blogging provides an alternative to writing assignments that would normally be presented only to the instructor, creating a wider, more interactive audience for student writing. In the opening scenario, the teacher has created a hybrid, multimodal activity involving the following steps:

1. Students first composed a written essay (by blogging) about a movie they'd recently seen and discussed in class.
2. Students then interacted with one another in writing by commenting on each others' work within the blog space.
3. Following this, students read, interpreted, and integrated the comments and questions regarding their blog essay left by other students.
4. Finally, students orally summarized these comments and incorporated them into a final oral report that analyzed the movie that they watched.

The chronological ordering of blog entries creates an archive or portfolio of personal work that can be revisited and reflected upon. In this sense, blogs allow students to gain an awareness of their own language development over time, for example by comparing their posts at the beginning of the semester with those at the end. In addition to its intraclass use as a journaling tool, blogging can also be used to link together study abroad students and those still at their home universities. Such uses of blogs serve a number of functions, such as providing pre-departure cultural exposure for students still at their home universities, helping students currently abroad to synthesize and put into narrative form their cultural and linguistic experiences, and for creating predeparture orientation materials that represent student specific experiences and points of view.

II. C. Questions for reflection:

1. Regular blog entries result in a series of written work that span weeks or months and thus can serve a variety of assessment functions. How might blogs be incorporated into a portfolio-style assessment exercise? What are the benefits of using portfolios to assess language learning, in comparison to more traditional forms of assessment?
2. How could the use of blogs be used to emphasize reflection and critical language awareness?
3. What sorts of pre-departure study abroad activities could be blog-based? What about the use of blogs during study abroad? How could stay-at-home students in other language courses benefit from exposure to the blogs of study abroad students?
4. How could blogs be used for language learners across a series of language courses over several semesters?

D. Blog Case Study: Class Biographers

An example of a blog intra-class role play activity, Class Biographers, is online at:

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=68>

A Spanish version of this activity is featured as a case study at:

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/casestudy2.php>



The case study describes an implementation of the activity completed in an advanced high school Spanish class, taught by Dana Webber of State College Area High School. In the activity, students write blog entries about their classmates and are prompted in class to report on what they wrote.

1. What did you find interesting about the case study? To what extent do you think it was or was not an effective activity?
2. What pre-activities could prepare students for this activity? What sorts of related activities could follow? What kind of content or language-based unit might this activity fit into?
3. How would this activity be different if it were face-to-face?
4. If you could implement this activity, how would you adapt it for your teaching situation?

E. Blog Activity Analysis

Consider these blog activities from the *CALPER Computer-Mediated Activity Library*.

Class Book Club

In this activity, students use blogs to discuss and reflect on stories, poems, or literature that the class is reading.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=11>

Notable Quotables

In this activity, students reflect on famous or interesting quotes in the target language.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=60>

Movie Journal

In this activity, students use blogs to keep a journal about movies or television shows they have watched over the course of a semester.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=42>

Blogs: How to Get Started

Blogs are slowly being integrated into school courseware packages, and are already popular on social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, or Yahoo 360. In addition, sites like Livejournal and Blogspot host basic personal blogs for free, or with added features for a fee. CALPER hosts a blog generator and can create and host blogs for any foreign language class at any American educational institution. Visit [<http://calper.la.psu.edu/tools.php>] to get started. All CALPER tools are Unicode-friendly, meaning they support diacritics and non-Western fonts.

Part III. Wikis

This section describes the technical and pedagogical uses of wikis (from the Hawai’ian *wiki wiki* meaning ‘quick’) in instructed foreign language contexts. To begin, read the following scenario of the use of wikis in a foreign language classroom, and consider how the technology is integrated into the class. What are your concerns about using wikis in the classroom? How would this scenario be similar to or different from a similar activity without the use of technology?

An advanced Spanish Writing class is broken into small groups and each group is stationed around a laptop. Students are talking and looking at the computer screens, while the teacher circulates and looks over the groups’ shoulders at the screens. The students are working on the class wiki newspaper and deciding on the layout and content of their group pages. Some students have posted content on their group’s page and now the group is reading through them to edit for structure and content. Other students are discussing how to split the content into sections and start a new page linked from the original. Although it is a group project, the teacher will be able to return to the pages and see who posted what content and who made changes when.

A. What is a wiki?

Wiki describes a web-based environment that supports collaborative writing. Wikis are designed to be intensely collaborative and allow multiple users to edit content and contribute to the production of continually evolving texts and informational resources. The radical dimension to wiki use is its challenge of the notion of authorship. In the archetypal wiki, there is no distinction between “author” and “audience” per se since readers of a wiki page can spontaneously opt to become a collaborating author. Individual wiki pages are usually password limited to one or a group of users using an access control list, but wiki technology is premised on the idea of universal write/access, where anyone is permitted to re-write any entry.

Within the context of group and educational uses, wikis remove the need to laboriously merge individual contributions in order to avoid deleting one another’s work. Most wiki engines track each addition, deletion, and modification so that changes can be assessed against earlier versions of the text. Furthermore, determining the amount of individual participation in a group project for assessment purposes need not rely exclusively on self- and peer-assessments by group members or observational hunches by the teacher. To use a simile, a class wiki project is something like an archaeological tell in that a wiki’s current content is but the top layer of temporally stratified layers of text that record the history of the writing process (Thorne & Payne, 2005).²

² Thorne, S. L., & Payne, J. S. (2005). *Internet-mediated Text and Multi-modal Expression in Foreign Language Education*. (CALPER Working Paper Series No. 5.) The Pennsylvania State University, Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research. Available online at: <http://calper.la.psu.edu/publications.php>

Consider This: Quick Information about Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org)

- Wikipedia is an on-line encyclopedia built by contributors from around the world, with entries in more than 2000 languages
- More than 1,848,000 entries are in English
- More than 500,000 entries are in German and French
- More than 300,000 entries are in Japanese and Dutch
- More than 100,000 entries are in Polish, Spanish, Swedish, Russian, Finnish (among other languages)
- 14 additional languages have 10,000 or more contributions

III. A. Questions for reflection:

1. What is the place of group and collaborative work in L2 writing?
2. What would be the advantage of a wiki over a Word document sent around among individuals with 'track changes' active?
3. What stages of project work might be ideally suited for a wiki?

B. How does a wiki work?

Unlike blogs, which are individually owned, a wiki is a group document. A wiki runs on a wiki engine set up or hosted on a particular server, and can be accessed, like blogs, from any browser. The base wiki has just one page, and users add new pages to the wiki to create a tree or network of hyperlinked documents, and so the wiki grows over time. Each user of the wiki can be given ownership of particular pages within the wiki and assign read/write access of that page to other users, who can add text, hyperlinks, images, and videos. For this reason, wikis are ideal for planning and brainstorming at the initial stages of a project, although they can also be polished as finished products (e.g. Wikipedia). In the opening scenario, for example, the wiki is being used as a group workspace for students to plan and layout an electronic newspaper, which will itself be wiki-based.

III. B. Questions for reflection:

1. What kinds of foreign language learning activities might lend themselves to the collaborative, open, and hypertextual nature of a wiki?
2. A wiki can track who made changes to a document and when they did so. How could an instructor use this for assessment or evaluation purposes?
3. The most well-known wiki is Wikipedia. What kinds of foreign language learning activities might be inspired by this resource?

C. Wiki Case Study: Alma Matters

An example of a wiki-based class project, Alma Matters, is online at:

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=69>

A French version of this activity is featured as a case study at:

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/casestudy3.php>



The case study describes an implementation of the activity completed in an advanced French writing course, taught by Luke Eilderts of Penn State University. In the activity, the class develops a Wikipedia entry for the university in French, to be used and read by French Wikipedia users.

1. What did you find interesting about the case study? The fact that students were writing “real” text to a global audience, all in the target language, is certainly compelling. Can you think of other venues, beyond Wikipedia, where foreign language students might be able to contribute knowledge or information to a broad audience?
2. What pre-activities could prepare students for this activity? What sorts of related activities could follow? What kind of content or language-based unit might this activity fit into?
3. If you could implement this activity, how would you adapt it for your teaching situation?

D. Wiki Activity Analysis

Consider these wiki activities from the *CALPER CMC Activity Library*.

NewsWiki

In this activity, students create a wiki-based online newspaper.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=70>

Create-your-own StoryWiki

In this project, students develop a hypertext/multi-plot story using a wiki.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/activity.php?page=16>

FoodieWiki

In this wiki project, students create an online guide to the cuisine and food culture of the target culture.

<http://calper.la.psu.edu/taflp/activity.php?page=14>

Wikis: How to Get Started

Wikis are less likely to be offered in school courseware packages, but may be more so in the future as their educational value is accepted. For those with dedicated technology support, your school server might be able to host a wiki through MediaWiki (see also: http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Wiki_Science:How_to_start_a_Wiki). CALPER hosts a wiki generator and can create and host wikis for any foreign language class at any American educational institution. Visit [<http://calper.la.psu.edu/tools.php>] to get started. All CALPER tools are Unicode-friendly, meaning they support diacritics and non-Western fonts.



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