



Teentalk on CD-ROM

TEENTALK
Lingonet Oy, Finland
2000
ISBN: 952-5285-28-6
(Single user package, 1 CD-ROM)
Institutional Package Network version, and
network license also available

Many commentators, notably IATEFL's Pete Sharma, emphasise that CD-ROMs are complementing trainers rather than superseding them! *Teentalk* is evidence of this observation. This new product is fun, easy to use and has many attractive features.

It is a multimedia package aimed at students and study groups in school from grade 4 upwards. The content and media itself will be stimulating to students of this age range and background, and will therefore support and enthuse them in their classroom endeavours.

The theme for *Teentalk* is the life of the 24 pupils of Manor House School, England. We can look at, listen to and read about their activities and views on a wide array of topics. These include the timetable, school food, hobbies, sports, bullying, careers and computers in school. Click on the photo of a pupil and you can interview them on the subjects which most interest you. The video clips are clear and most of the students are approachable and engaging.

Inevitably, some clips are less clear than others; perhaps this adds to the challenge. The setting is very clear and realistic: this is an English school and we are motivated by meeting real people, interacting with them and finding out their opinions.

The objective of *Teentalk* is to strengthen comprehension and conversation skills. Here, students will definitely be challenged by the video clips which are replete with hesitations, self correction, slip ups and idioms (surprisingly, given the school setting, accents and dialect are not prominently featured). For example, a student is asked which computer games she enjoys and replies: 'yeah, I'm into ... like ... Gameboy or something'.

If we click on the 'Teacher on Demand' tab we see a video clip of the sort of teacher we used to refer to as a 'schoolmaster' telling us that 'like' is used in this context as a filler, showing the speaker is being deliberately vague and needs thinking time. This schoolmaster comments on items of linguistic and cultural interest but the 'teacher's room' itself can be hidden behind a password if required.

“This is a seamlessly constructed and imaginative CD which will support the trainer and student well.”

fact the support available to disc users is very thorough and easy to navigate. In addition to the 'Teacher on Demand' facility the student can call up transcripts, a glossary, do vocabulary and grammar exercises and print worksheets and take notes on a memo pad.

Most of the exercises are of a straightforward gap-fill, true/false or matching variety. The fun and stimulation of this product comes primarily from the interaction with the students featured in the video clips. This is probably a more enticing prospect for younger students who may come to view the school pupils they encounter almost as penpals. The setting is very culturally specific and some of the references made (e.g. a student revealing their favourite TV programme is 'Heartbeat') may not be well known outside the UK. Some may find this challenging, some may find it a barrier. It is, however, authentic.

This is a seamlessly constructed and imaginative CD which will support the trainer and student well.

*John F Fagan, Freelance ELT, working with
York Associates and York University, UK*