Librarian's Shelf by Karen Stuart

Electronic Education: Powerspeak Languages

Columbus Public Library offers over twenty electronic resources including databases, testing services, and manuals. Powerspeak Languages is one of these web-based resources available to you in the library or at home using your library card. If you have ever wanted to learn another language but didn't know where to begin, or if you simply want to better communicate with your Hispanic neighbors, explore this resource.

Offering Spanish, French, German, Mandarin, and English as a second language, Powerspeak teaches the basics of these languages using a variety of activities. Vocabulary, common phrases and questions, and grammar rules are taught through activities such as listening to pronunciation, matching words to pictures, video tutorials, constructing sentences and more. The courses are designed to use multi-sensory activities and appeal to a variety of learning styles using scored activities, exercises, lessons, and games. Powerspeak also uses images, audio, and video to help learners retain their language skills. The lessons are structured to mimic conversations with native speakers and involve you in an adventure story to keep you motivated as you learn.

Each lesson begins with a box containing instructions and a reminder that more explanation is available. The program does use sound as a tool to learn pronunciation, requiring the use of headphones or speakers. Speech comparison of your pronunciation is also an available tool so a microphone and Adobe Flash Player installed on your computer is recommended but not required.

Similar to Rosetta Stone, Powerspeak does not emphasize memorizing vocabulary; instead users learn new words through repetition, while practicing grammar and sentence construction. Powerspeak is not as in depth as Rosetta Stone and is designed as a starting point to learning a new language or refreshing your language skills. While you won't be fluent, you should be able to communicate well in the language learned at the end of your 8 unit course.

To use Powerspeak Languages, start by visiting www.columbusne.us/library and clicking E-Materials from the Quick Links menu on the right side of the page. Then scroll through our alphabetical list of electronic resources and click Powerspeak Languages. This will open a new web page and require your Columbus Public Library card number. Once you have selected the language you would like to learn, I recommend you create a free account that will allow the program to remember which units you have completed. (You can, however use the program without an account). To create an account click "log in" at the top right of the page, then follow the link to "sign up now" and enter your email, name, and password.

Powerspeak offers the opportunity to learn a new language at your own pace, without having to invest in expensive language learning software. You can access the program via the internet without having to download any software, allowing you to use multiple computers. Whether you are interested in improving your language skills or learning a new language for work, school, or travel, Powerspeak is an excellent resource for you.