

# ReCALL

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# Editorial

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At first sight, the articles in this issue of *ReCALL* may appear to have nothing whatsoever in common: the paper by Magnus Nordenhake and Roger Greatrex describes in some details the development of a multimedia program for learners of Chinese; then Uschi Felix and Michael Lawson discuss a co-operative approach to writing in German; George Talbot focuses on translation from Italian to English; and Patricia Manning looks at gender agreement rules in French.

Serious readers should not, however, be deterred by this apparent inconsistency of subject matter. All the authors of these articles start with the *prima facie* case that language learners' needs are paramount, and that sound pedagogical foundations must underpin the introduction of technology in order to provide for those needs in ways which would not otherwise be possible.

Software reviews are always appreciated by readers of *ReCALL*, and thanks are due to colleagues who have volunteered to spend time evaluating and reporting on a range of new programs. The CTI Centre for Modern Languages at the University of Hull is glad to receive copies of software for review, from either commercial or academic developers.

It is hoped that subscribers to *ReCALL* will, in the coming months, take advantage of the opportunity to discuss relevant issues by joining the electronic discussion list which is being established for members of EUROCALL. Details of how to join the list are enclosed on a separate sheet. If this has become separated from your copy of *ReCALL*, please contact me at the address on this page for full instructions.

**June Thompson**



# Computer assisted language learning for two-byte languages: the case of Chinese

Magnus Nordenhake and Roger Greatrex

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The teaching of the Chinese language in Sweden, and indeed the whole of Scandinavia, has always suffered from an absence of suitable teaching materials. Hitherto, there has not existed any teaching course specifically adapted to the needs of Swedish students, with the result that teachers have been forced to use English-language courses produced in the United States or England, or text-books printed in Mainland China or Taiwan.

In countries such as the United States or Australia Chinese is taught in some secondary schools. In Scandinavia, however, the Chinese language is extremely rarely taught in secondary schools, and it is the rule that tuition for those students who wish to learn the language begins when they enter university. In other words, university education in Chinese begins with the very rudiments of the language. It is clear that if Scandinavian university students are rapidly to attain a proficiency in the Chinese language comparable to the language level ability of university students studying, for example, French, German or Russian, they require intensive and effective tuition.

While computer-based teaching materials have been used in the natural sciences for a

decade or more, and in the instruction of Western languages for several years, students of Chinese in Scandinavia have without exception continued to use printed publications. This has been unavoidable since various problems to do with the input and generation of Chinese characters, and an absence of problem-free software to work with Chinese in a computer environment, meant that the efficient production of computer-based teaching materials was previously quite unfeasible. Of course, there have been a number of experimental projects, but none of these have resulted in the production of full-scale courses suitable for regular use at universities. Similarly, the few educational applications that have appeared in the United States and China have all been severely limited in scope. As a result, after a short while the eager student regretfully discovers that, apart from a few computer-game-style features, the quality of language instruction provided by these educational applications is minimal.

As the first stage in a long-term effort to develop efficient computerised courses for the teaching of modern Chinese, in 1990 a national project was begun in Sweden – The Chinese-Swedish Dictionary Database Project,

under the leadership of Professor Lars Ragnvald. The operational centre of the project, which is supported by the Riksbankens jubileumsfond (The Commemorative Fund of the National Bank of Sweden) and the Crafoordska stiftelse (The Crafoord Foundation), was placed at the Department of East Asian Languages at Lund University. The aim of the first stage of the project was to produce a Chinese-Swedish dictionary in both computerised and printed forms; a Chinese-Swedish dictionary has not hitherto existed. This first stage of the project is, in principle, complete. At present, the final editing of the dictionary prior to publication in both computerised and printed forms is underway with the cooperation of experienced Chinese lexicographers.

The Chinese-Swedish Dictionary Database contains over 60,000 word-combinations, based upon the 6,763 Chinese characters of the Chinese computer encoding system.<sup>1</sup> This size and scope amounts to a comprehensive dictionary of the modern Chinese language. Additionally, it is intended that a number of specialised dictionaries and other applications will be successively added to the database. To enable this expansion, the Database has been constructed on stringent modular and lexicographical principles. Furthermore, from the very beginning, the use of the Database for the development of educational applications was envisaged, and the Database was specifically structured accordingly.

In 1992, the second stage of The Chinese-Swedish Dictionary Database Project was inaugurated. This project, entitled 'The Development of Modern Teaching Materials for Chinese and Other East Asian Languages', under the leadership of Professor Lars Ragnvald, has been undertaken in collaboration with the Swedish Council for the Renewal of Undergraduate Education, and is partially funded by this body. The aim of this stage of the project is to develop and produce computerised teaching materials for Chinese, and subsequently other East Asian languages, at Swedish universities. In the case of Chinese, the computerised course is a development from the Chinese-Swedish Dictionary Database. Among the requirements placed upon

this computerised course in Chinese is that it should enable students rapidly and efficiently to learn to read and understand modern Chinese, pronounce standard Chinese, learn the correct orthography of Chinese characters, and understand Chinese grammar. In other words, the computerised course has to offer both visual and auditory instruction, including lexical and grammatical features.

A further major requirement was that the computerised course should be user-friendly and allow student users to plan their studies according to their own wishes, rather than enforcing classroom attendance at specific times. In other words, the course should be portable, rather than monolithic. The course was produced using HyperCard running on a Macintosh operating system – the specific hardware used during the prototype stage was a 68040 CPU-based Macintosh; the minimum configuration for running the course is a Macintosh (or Macintosh clone) equipped with a 68030 CPU, 8MB RAM and a minimum of 100MB hard disk space. It was also decided that, with regard to its contents, this computerised course would break with commonly-used teaching materials, which almost invariably deal with the trials and tribulations of one or more foreigners learning Chinese in China. Instead, following the standards found in courses for learning Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and almost every other language in which printed courses are available, the principal actors in the course are all Chinese living in mainland China. The situations in which they find themselves are real situations which occur in everyday life, rather than the campus life in most teaching manuals.

In order to achieve the computer requirements of the course, a free-navigation system has been developed as the heart of the teaching application. This system allows the student user to efficiently and simply move between the different levels of the application, viewing at will the computerised texts which make up each lesson of the course, in transcription, Chinese characters, or in a mixture of high frequency characters and Pinyin – with or without Swedish equivalents. Access to a local context dictionary provides the translation of

words or individual characters, as well as other examples of the use of the look-up item elsewhere in the course. Additionally, and very importantly, in addition to being able to hear the text of each sentence as running text, the lexical pronunciation of each character can be readily heard.

Given the possibilities of this multi-media application, in order to overcome the problem of the introduction of large numbers of Chinese characters at an early stage in the learning process, a combination of the Pinyin transcription system and high frequency characters is used in the course. The number of characters gradually increases in each text, while the use of Pinyin gradually decreases. Texts uniquely in Chinese characters first appear towards the completion of the full first-year course. This means that even at an early stage in the course the content of the texts is not restricted by the number of Chinese characters which have been already introduced. Finally, it is worth noting that since approximately 70% of the computerised course is in Chinese, and only 30% in Swedish, the translation and adaptation of the course to another language pair is by no means an unfeasible task.

It is not easy to produce CALL courseware for Chinese on ASCII-based computers. As we are all well aware, the acronym ASCII stands for the American Standard Code for Information Interchange. While such a standard code is very useful, it is unfortunate from the point of view of Chinese studies since the English alphabet has very few letters. The full extent of the 256 slots of the extended ASCII code is totally inadequate for writing Chinese, Japanese and Korean, i.e. the so-called CJK-languages. These languages are written with Chinese characters (henceforth Hanzi) and, in the case of Korean and Japanese, with additional indigenous character sets. Although a major standard Chinese dictionary from the eighteenth century lists approximately 50,000 Hanzi,<sup>2</sup> only 7,000 of these are registered in the modern *Xiandai Hanyu tongyongzibiao* (a List of Hanzi in Common Use) and a mere 3,500 Hanzi in *Xiandai Hanyu changyongzibiao* (List of Hanzi in Frequent Use), both

issued recently in the People's Republic of China. Basic literacy in Mainland China is regarded as being the equivalent of the ability to read and write 2,000 Hanzi. It is obvious that however low we set the number of Hanzi needed we will never be able to reduce it to 256 characters.

The solution to this predicament has hitherto been to use a so-called two-byte setup, where two ASCII-coded characters are used to write one Hanzi. In the encoding system used in Mainland China this means that for instance the *zi* in Hanzi, which itself means 'character', is rendered by a combination of the two ASCII-characters  $\langle \rangle$  and  $\div$ . The string  $\langle \rangle \div$  when formatted into a font in a computer operating system enabled to handle Hanzi renders the character for *zi*.

Another problem concerning the handling of Hanzi text is the fact that there does not exist any immediate way of defining the Chinese word. In phonetic writing systems the text is 'chunked' into graphic words by means of intermediary spaces, while Hanzi texts are written in never-ending strings with no obvious delimiter markers, except for a handful of punctuation characters. This inconvenient circumstance has its origin in the fact that the Hanzi is popularly considered to be the only (i.e. both the smallest and the largest) unit of the Chinese writing system. One leading authority (Chao 1968) deems the Chinese equivalent to the English 'word' (*ci*) to be a concept which exclusively has meaning for linguists. Fortunately, there exist alternative ways of writing Chinese. One way which suits our purpose, especially with respect to graphic word definition, is the so-called Pinyin transcription system. Pinyin transcribes Hanzi phonematically and, which is more important, includes a space between 'chunks' of text. Such chunks can then be viewed as graphically defined Chinese words.<sup>3</sup>

It is a well known fact that much of the difficulty in learning Chinese is connected to the time-consuming study of the Chinese orthography. Simultaneously, it is of course of the utmost importance to the student of Chinese to learn the Hanzi as quickly as possible. To teach students of Chinese solely the Pinyin

transcription system is to do them a disservice. When they first arrive in China and are faced with the Chinese linguistic reality, they immediately realise that the Pinyin transcription system is not used as a means of communication in China.

As already stated, in the course a combination of high frequency characters in Hanzi and less frequent characters in Pinyin transcription is used. As the student proceeds, the transcription progressively substitutes Hanzi for Pinyin (see Figure 1).

The courses are divided into two units where one unit corresponds to one semester of Chinese studies. Each unit is in turn divided into fifteen lessons. During the first semester when the student is engaged in the study of basic phonology and grammar, Hanzi are introduced at a low rate according to a linear scale with two plateaux in the progression. In lessons one to four, twelve new words in Hanzi are added for each lesson. The fifth lesson does not introduce any new Hanzi and thus constitutes a plateau. The progression then starts again at the sixth lesson with a new plateau in the tenth lesson, and so on. By the end of the first semester 13% of the total number of words are in Hanzi. The second semester, on the other hand, is much more demanding in terms of the study of the Chinese script. After the first semester most of the phonological and grammatical difficulties in Chinese have already been encountered and work with script and vocabulary learning can be allowed more attention. The rate of introduction of Hanzi is consequently more rapid, and twenty new words per lesson are written in Hanzi until the first plateau, twenty-five words thereafter until the second plateau, and thirty words in the each of the last five lessons of the course (see Figure 2).

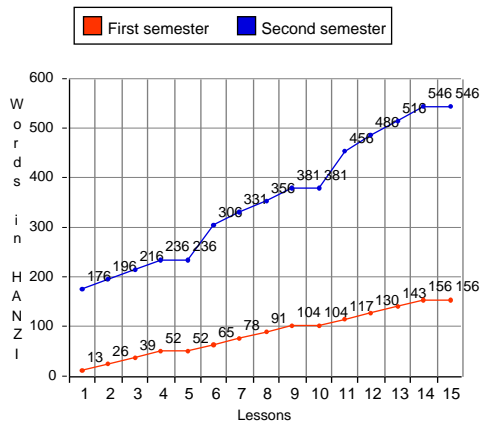


Figure 2 Progression in Hanzi learning

The texts in the first fifteen lessons amount to 8,294 Hanzi: of these 875 are different. They make up 1,255 different Chinese words. Although the authors were given free rein in writing their texts, the characters and words fall well within the guidelines of the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK), i.e. the Chinese Proficiency Test developed in the People’s Republic of China to measure the Chinese language skills of non-native speakers. The Hanzi stipulated in the HSK are divided into 4 levels according to their frequency in standard Chinese. All the 8,294 Hanzi in the texts are found in the HSK lists of Hanzi. They are grouped in the different levels as is shown in Figure 3.

There are two different dictionary databases used in the course. One is the Hanzi Dictionary Database where all the Hanzi, their pronunciations and meanings are stored. The Hanzi database is linked to the Word Dictionary Database where the pronunciations and meanings of the words, rather than the individual characters, are stored.

Lǐú: 你还 cháng dǎ tàijíquán 吗?  
 Lǐ: Zǎo jiù bù dá 了。有 shíhòu, wǎnshàng 到 gōngyuán 去 sǎnsǎn bù。  
 Lǐ: O, 到了, jù 是这 zuò lóu。Zǎogāo, diànrǎ yòu huài 了。  
 Lǐú: 你们 zhǐ 几 lóu?  
 Lǐ: Shí’èr lóu。  
 Lǐú: 那么, 我 zhīdào 你不 zài dǎ tàijíquán 的 yuányīn 了!

Qiáng: 我爸爸字不 shǐ 几个, 他冬天卖卖 hōng shānyú, 夏天卖卖 sīguā, 春天卖卖 dānjī, 秋天卖卖 车票、 chūanpiào, shìbiān 再 chāocháo gupiao, aiyā, 钱不要 zhuan 地太多 ou!  
 冬: 你帮你爸爸卖 sīguā 有钱吗?  
 Qiáng: 怎么没有, 要多少拿多少, 下 xuéqī 我还要带着 bǐbǐn 上学呢!

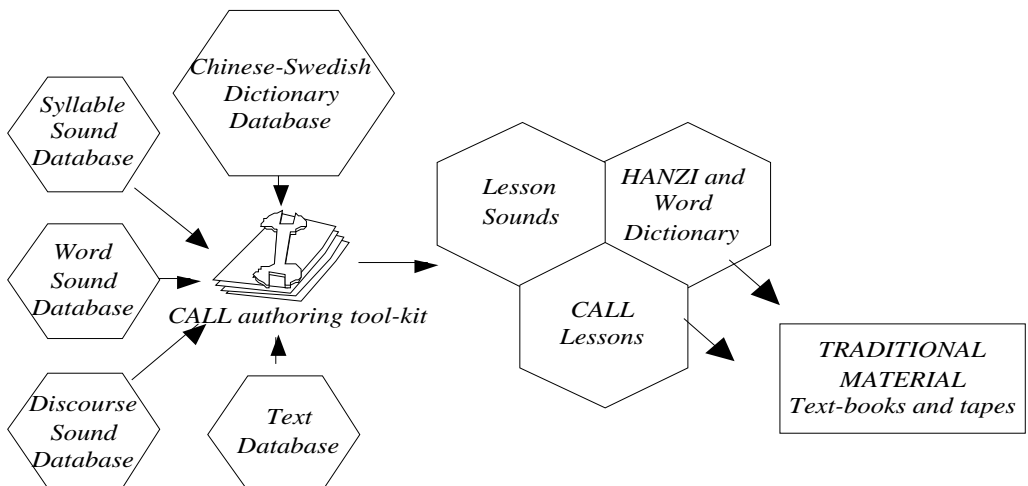
Figure 1 Progression of Hanzi introduction: mixed texts for the first and second semesters

HSK level	Frequency in Lund texts	Relative frequency
1	7342	88,52%
2	638	7,69%
3	272	3,28%
4	30	0,36%

**Figure 3** HSK levels and Hanzi in the Text Database

The Chinese language has a limited set of approximately 1,300 different tonal syllables. The speech sounds of these syllables are digitized and contained in a Syllable Sound Database, regardless of whether they are used in the course or not. As the words of the Chinese language are not merely a product of the combinations of these syllables, all the words in the texts are recorded, digitised and stored in a different Word Sound Database. Finally all the sentences in the texts are stored as Quick-Time-films in a separate Discourse Sound Database.<sup>4</sup>

The different constituents of the Project are linked together by an authoring tool-kit for two-byte languages. The tool-kit connects the different forms of data together into the CALL course. The flow of information can be schematised as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** Information flow of the Project

In the authoring tool-kit, the texts which have already been segmented into words are automatically given Pinyin transcriptions. The tool-kit first produces monolingual word-lists, and then establishes links to the Chinese-Swedish Dictionary Database which provides the Hanzi and the words with Swedish translations. Once the Pinyin transcriptions have been given, lexical pronunciations are provided by the tool-kit through hypertext links to the sound databases. The mixing of transcription and Hanzi is also generated by the tool-kit, as well as the production of card-based multimedia text-books. All the generated texts (Hanzi texts, Pinyin transcriptions and Swedish translations), as well as the wordlists (context bound Hanzi and word dictionaries), are exported from the authoring tool-kit in a format (Rich Text Format) compatible with most word processors. These files are used for producing the paper-based text-books. The sound included in the courseware is recorded onto audio tapes to be used on tape-recorders by students who prefer more traditional ways of language learning than computer assisted tuition.

In the electronic text-book, the following features are included:

1. The user can choose in what sort of config-

- urations he wants to study the text: only Hanzi, with or without Swedish translations; only Pinyin transcription, with or without Swedish translations; or the 'mixed' setup described above, with or without Swedish translations, etc;
- 2. When the 'sound mode' is utilised, the digitized speech can be listened to in a number of ways: the full discourse of each card is played as the user browses through the course-ware. The user can also point at a single sentence and have that sentence played repeatedly. When the user simultaneously presses the option key and clicks a word with the mouse button, the lexical pronunciation of the word is heard. By alternately clicking on the words and the sentences, the user can compare the significant differences between the pronunciation of words in context and in isolation;
- 3. When the 'text mode' is depressed, two functions are presented to the user. If the mouse is clicked for a longer interval, a small window containing the Hanzi for the

- word, its transcription and Swedish translation is shown. At the same time, the lexical pronunciation of the word is played. A shorter click on a word produces a screen window with the vocabulary list of the lesson, at the same time as the lexical pronunciation is heard (see Figure 5).
- 4. When the word list is clicked at a compound, the user is given a choice in a smaller window: she can look up the full Hanzi compound, or the separate Hanzi which constitute the compound. When a choice has been made, a screen appears showing the lookup item as it is defined in the Chinese-Swedish Dictionary Database. In this screen the sound of the lexical items can also be produced by pressing the appropriate button.

The non-linear characteristic of hypertext technology has been criticised as confusing for the human mind; a navigator in cyberspace often 'gets lost' and does not know where he is, or how to get back to where he began.

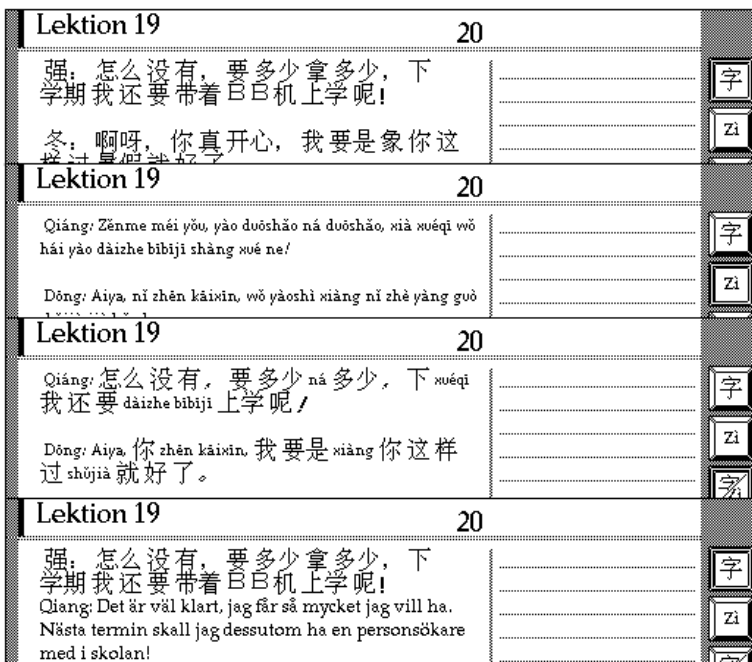


Figure 5 Examples of hypertext flexibility in the rendering of Chinese texts

Although this may be a problem for more linear types of text such as a hypertext novel, it is a smaller problem for teaching materials which already, in their printed form, are often used in a non-linear fashion. Indices are consulted and lessons are revised constantly. Much concern has, however, been paid to movement within the courseware. The 'pages' are provided with electronic 'paper clips', allowing the user to immediately find the way back to where the paper clip is placed. The index has been constructed so that the user is shown where she was when studying the previous time. The user can also press a button which characterises a lesson as completed. When the button is pressed a lesson so designated is identified by a tick in the lesson index.

Among the pedagogical features of the courseware are included, for example, phonological and lexicological training. In training the student's abilities in Chinese phonology, auditive contrasts are provided at three phonological levels of the Chinese language: at the level of syllable pronunciation (what is the pronunciation of the Hanzi?), of word pronunciation (how do the isolated syllabic pronunciations change and what coarticulative effects can be noticed on lexical tones in a word frame?), and of sentence pronunciation (how does the pronunciation of words change in the sentence environment and what effect does sentence intonation have on lexical tones? How, for example, are sentence foci implemented in Chinese?). At the lexicological level, users are given a means of investigating the texts at two different semantic levels. Firstly at the Hanzi level, which in the majority of cases is identical with the morphematic level, with broad and fuzzy-edged semantic fields. Secondly, when the student navigates up to the word level, he experiences the process of how morphematic compounding decreases the given semantic fields of the morphemes, as well as noticing different processes in Chinese word production.

To date, the Lund University CALL course for Chinese has been used by three relatively small groups of students. While their examination results have been highly promising, it

would perhaps be presumptuous to attribute their efficient language learning uniquely to the CALL course. This academic year (1994-95) the CALL course is being used by a large group of first-year students, something which allows a more qualified evaluation of the merits and demerits of the course.

## Notes

1. For presentations of the Chinese-Swedish dictionary database, see Xue & Nordenhake (1993) and Nordenhake & Ragvald (1994).
2. A hundred schools of thought contend on the exact number of Hanzi in the Kangxi Dictionary of 1716. Numbers range from 47,035 (ZDB-YW 1988) to 48,641 (DeFrancis 1990).
3. Along with this benefit, it also presents an easy way for the student of the Chinese language to learn the pronunciation of Hanzi. It also offers the computer user an easy way to input Hanzi when using an ASCII keyboard.
4. The syllable and word sounds are digitised at a rate of 44 MHz in a 16-bit configuration and contained as resources in HyperCard stacks. The advantages of using QuickTime-movies as a container for the discourse sounds are obvious: the QuickTime format can also contain video sequences serving as illustrations of the discourses.

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# Developing German writing skills by way of Timbuktu<sup>1</sup>

A pilot study comparing computer-based and conventional teaching

Uschi Felix<sup>2</sup> and Michael Lawson<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>School of Education, Flinders University, Australia

*This paper reports on a pilot project which examined the effects on essay writing skills in advanced German of computer-based teaching which allowed a co-operative approach to writing and the provision of immediate teacher and peer feedback through the interactive display and net-working of student work.*

*Third year German students were assigned to computer-based or conventional teaching groups taught by two different teachers using common materials and the same task-based approach. Prior to implementation of the project and again at the end, students were given a standard writing task to allow the level of their writing skills to be evaluated structurally and linguistically. The major focus was on the development of arguments, together with appropriate introductions and conclusions. Grammar and expression were also measured to check whether the absence of an explicit focus on grammar had a detrimental effect on accuracy.*

*The students in these two groups along with all other third year German students completed a questionnaire that elicited information about their abilities and interest in German and their attitude to the use of computers. Teacher evaluation and qualitative data were obtained from participating students at the end of the project. Results indicated that the experimental students achieved significantly higher ratings for the logical linking of ideas in the body of their essays and were positive about the technology.*

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## Introduction

Tertiary studies, especially in the Arts, are dominated by the production of written work.

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<sup>1</sup>This research was supported by teaching development grants from the University of Adelaide and the Apple Consortium.

A large number of students find it difficult to produce essays of high quality, and nod knowingly when, in writing workshops, lecturers' comments such as *poor structure* or *flawed argument*, are discussed. Even when writing in their mother tongue, students tend to think of content rather than structure (Jackson 1991), and poor writers tend to concentrate most on

surface-level linguistics, thus hindering the flow of ideas (Flower and Hayes 1981). When students are required to write in a second language, the burden of achieving linguistic accuracy in terms of grammar and expression usually takes precedence over the organisation of ideas. This can compound the student's difficulty and increases the likelihood that the writing will be of poor quality.

In responding to the students' writing the lecturer must consider appropriate means of providing useful feedback. This creates something of a dilemma, for while the provision of detailed feedback is very time-consuming (impossibly so if it is attempted in individual sessions with the student), some research indicates that students often ignore even the most instructive and well produced feedback, and simply check their mark before putting the assignment aside, thus making it likely that the same mistakes will be repeated in the next exercise. The most alarming comment on feedback comes from Hillocks (1986) who, after reviewing research in this area, notes: "The available research suggests that teaching by written comment on compositions is generally ineffective" (in Leki 1990: 61).

How can we hope to improve second language writing in the light of all this? There is some indication that feedback is effective if it is provided during the writing process itself (Freedman 1987), that interactive feedback strategies are useful (Cohen and Cavalcanti 1990), and that peer feedback can be helpful (Nightingale 1988). There is also agreement that teaching approaches which focus on linguistic features and structure simultaneously rather than separately will lead to more satisfactory writing (Fathman and Whalley 1990).

It makes sense therefore to find strategies which will combine the teaching of linguistic features and of structure in an environment where feedback can be given during the writing process itself by both the teacher and fellow students.

This approach has already been tried successfully by Felix and Lawson (1994) in an academic bridging course for overseas students. In that project, students brought their most recent written work to the class on trans-

parencies which could be discussed and expanded collectively with the use of an overhead projector. While this led to successful learning outcomes, it had two frustrating features. Firstly, it was time-consuming. Secondly, it was not an efficient on-line procedure, since the sample piece of writing became very messy under the weight of suggested amendments, and students needed to rewrite extensively away from the class.

A natural progression would be to turn to technology and seek improvement through word processing. This would certainly solve the second problem – the text could be amended on the screen and a clean final copy printed after the class has worked its way from the error-filled first draft to an agreed final version – and perhaps alleviate the first.

In an increasing number of projects using word processing, especially in ESL writing, positive outcomes have been reported on a variety of features (Friedrich 1989, Li 1993, Farrow et al 1993, Tapper and Ike 1993). While there is strong agreement that computers can have a positive effect on students' interest (Cunningham 1989), there is still too little evidence relating to the effects of computer-based instruction in writing on the students' written performance.

This project used Timbuktu\* software in a networked computer laboratory to allow students' writing to be analysed and amended on-line by both lecturer and students in a way that was interactive and co-operative and that maximised peer feedback.

The major aim of this preliminary study was to evaluate the effect of this computer-based system in analysing writing and providing feedback to students in a third-year univer-

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\*Timbuktu software allows users to import the complete contents of another computer over any network. In this project, it was used to connect Macintoshes in a laboratory to a large projection screen to enable the class jointly to edit a set piece of work. Farallon Computing claims that the software will connect Macintoshes and PCs over a variety of networks, and that it can be used to set up joint working sessions in distant sites over international networks. The package is available from Farallon Computing Inc., 2470 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501-1010, USA. In Australia it costs just under \$300.

sity German language class. Of principal interest was the effect of the computer-based teaching procedure on the quality of student writing relative to that of a conventional classroom approach.

## Method

### *Subjects*

Fifteen students in a third year university German language class took part in the experiment. Of these, seven female students made up the conventional group and seven females and one male the computer group. The students were assigned to groups at random. Previous performance indicated that both groups consisted of students with average language proficiency, both written and oral.

### *Procedure*

Teaching took place in two-hour sessions every two weeks. Both groups were taught at the same time and attended a total of eight sessions within the normal university timetable. The computer group was taught by the regular German III class teacher in the Apple Consortium teaching laboratory. The conventional group was taught by another teacher in the students' regular teaching environment. Both teachers were native German speakers. It had been planned initially that the groups would change places in the second semester to satisfy principles of equity and to reduce threats to validity associated with the difference in teachers. At the planned changeover time, however, it was decided that it was too early to re-administer the pre-test. For this reason the groups continued with the same teachers for the rest of their classes.

The two teachers met before every session to discuss teaching plans, procedure and content, to ensure that all of the material covered during teaching would be as similar as possible. Emphasis was given to the use of meaningful, contextualised and authentic materials and procedures. This meant that students were given articles from the latest German newspapers, supplemented by videos and audios from German media sources, these background

materials being discussed extensively in tutorials. Students were required to produce a short essay in German on each topic every two weeks. Eight topics were covered during the course, resulting in eight pieces of writing on the following subjects:

*Why do young Germans turn into neo-Nazis?  
Analyse the problems of living conditions in  
Germany today.*

*Are attitudes towards Aids different in young  
Germans and young Australians?*

*Do you agree with Morshäuser's definition of  
education?*

*Analyse German Reality-TV.*

*Are German students better off than Australian  
students?*

*What is the situation of the Turks in Germany  
today?*

*Write a critique of Ute Lemper's concert.*

The teaching approach of both teachers was communicative, interactive and task-based, and carried out predominantly in the target language. Each two-hour class consisted of two parts. In the first part, selective feedback on the last writing task was discussed. This meant that for each session the teachers chose specific sections of students' writing – grammar, expression or structure – to illustrate a particular point relevant to the entire group. The second part consisted of collecting ideas and structures for the next writing task. One of the eight sessions was devoted entirely to the writing of introductions and another to the writing of conclusions. Grammar was not taught explicitly through any systematic treatment of rules, but was contextualised in the students' work. This meant, for example, that a particularly common error in the week's work, in the various forms in which it had occurred might be discussed and correct forms generated by the group. The same points of grammar, therefore, were not necessarily dealt with in both groups.

### *Computer group conditions*

The computer group was taught in the teaching laboratory with each student having access to a Macintosh computer. The teacher could project the work being developed by any student on to

a large screen; either the teacher or the student could amend the document; and all students were able to comment on it and make relevant suggestions. At the end of each class students were able to print some or all of the writing which had been dealt with in that class.

Ideally students would have come to each class with their work on a disk, but since they did not have access to computers outside class time, they handed in their work as hard copy and it was corrected and marked in a conventional manner to provide the same type of feedback as that given in the conventional group.

The major advantage of the networked software, therefore, was to enable students to observe a greater range of writing as it was being developed, and to receive feedback on that writing, whether or not it was their own. Since all the students in the computer group were inexperienced in computer use prior to taking the course, considerable time had to be spent familiarising them with the equipment. Further time was lost when technical problems had to be sorted out in the first class.

### ***Conventional group conditions***

The conventional group met in a normal classroom. Students' homework assignments were treated in the same manner as in the computer group, with an overhead projector being used in place of the computer system to duplicate, as far as possible, the conditions experienced by the computer group students.

### ***Assessment of student writing***

The main independent measure of progress from pre- to post-teaching consisted of a short essay written by the students in the first week of semester and again, under identical conditions and with the same instructions, at the end of the project. Without preparation and without dictionaries or other reference materials, students were asked to write as much and as well as they could in 45 minutes on why it is important to learn another language. No other instructions were given at either time and no reference was made to this essay during the rest of the course.

Two types of analysis were carried out on these writing samples. The first generated rat-

ings for the adequacy of the three segments of the essay. For these ratings of *structural adequacy* an independent language teacher, also a native German speaker, and the control teacher were asked to rate the introduction, argument and conclusion on a scale of 1–4. Raters were asked to judge the introduction in terms of its suitability as a statement of the problem and of its clarity of focus. The body of the essay was evaluated in terms of the logical sequencing of ideas. The conclusion was judged in terms of its adequacy in providing a concluding statement of the argument that was not repetitive. Both raters were given the pieces of writing in the same random order, blind as to group and the time of writing. The experimental teacher was not involved in any rating task.

The second analysis, of the *technical adequacy* of the students' language use, involved the counting of errors in grammar and expression. Scores were converted to percentage error rates by dividing raw error scores by the total number of words in the piece.

### ***Attitudes to the study of German***

Before and after the project, students were given a questionnaire designed to extract information about how they rated their interest in German, their overall and specific abilities, and their attitudes towards computers. This questionnaire was also given to all other third-year German students who had not participated in the project, to ascertain whether there was a differential change in interest in German in the three groups. Students were asked to rate their creative ability; their abilities at constructing an argument in English, at public speaking in English, at German language conversation, and at writing in German; their interest in German; and their views of the use of computers in German language study. Students in the computer group were also asked to comment on how they felt about their experience with computer-based teaching.

### ***Teacher questionnaire***

In order to compare teachers of the computer group and the conventional group, students were asked to fill in a standard teaching evaluation questionnaire at the end of the project.

This information was gathered to examine any differential teacher effect that might emerge in the final design of the study. Students were asked to rate the teacher and the teaching they experienced on seven-point scales for overall effectiveness, organisation, concern for students, enthusiasm, encouragement, interest and clarity.

**Discursive comments on computer teaching**

At the end of the project, the experimental students were asked to comment on how they felt about the computer teaching.

**Results**

**Student writing**

Results of the analysis of students’ essays at the beginning and end of the course are given in Table 1. Mean scores and standard deviations for each of the measures of structural and technical adequacy are shown for both groups of students.

On each of the three structural adequacy ratings, the computer group showed improved scores from the beginning to the end of the course. There was also improvement in the conventional group on two of the measures,

with the mean ratings for essay conclusions showing no change.

These results were analysed using a two-way (Group x Occasion) repeated analysis of variance with Occasion as the repeated measure. The results of this set of analyses are summarised in Table 2, which shows the values of the *F* statistic for each effect. The higher scores at the end of the course for the students’ introductions and for the body of their essays are indicated in the significant Occasion effects. For the ratings of the body of the essays there was also a significant Group x Occasion interaction which reflected the greater improvement over time of the computer group on this set of ratings. The Group effect for the conclusions indicates the higher level of the combined ratings for the computer group across the two occasions. The interpretation of this effect must take into account the higher level of the computer group at the start of the course. Even so it is clear that the initial small difference in rating for conclusions had increased at the end of the course.

There were no significant effects for either of the two measures of technical adequacy. For both groups the error rates for both grammar and expression declined slightly between the initial and final occasions.

**Table 1** Means and standard deviations for measures of student writing quality

Measure	Computer Group				Conventional Group				
	Pre-course		Post-course		Pre-course		Post-course		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>STRUCTURAL ADEQUACY</b>									
Introduction	1.00	0.96	1.94	1.15	0.86	0.69	1.57	1.27	
Body	2.31	0.46	3.19	0.46	2.57	0.61	2.64	0.48	
Conclusion	1.19	0.65	1.63	0.58	0.71	0.81	0.71	0.49	
<b>TECHNICAL ADEQUACY</b>									
Grammar	6.24	3.91	5.56	3.78	5.53	1.76	5.32	2.65	
Expression	3.80	3.22	3.17	2.84	3.61	2.35	2.78	1.74	
LENGTH	126.50	22.94	229.38	35.10	139.14	29.41	191.71	47.47	

**Table 2** Results of analyses of variance of student writing measures

Measure	Effect (F 1,13)		
	Group	Occasion	Group x Occasion
<b>STRUCTURAL ADEQUACY</b>			
Introduction	0.34	6.74 *	0.12
Body	0.53	7.78 *	5.61 *
Conclusion	6.12 *	1.49	1.49
<b>TECHNICAL ADEQUACY</b>			
Grammar	0.09	1.26	0.35
Expression	0.05	2.35	0.05
<b>WORDS</b>	0.96	38.66 **	4.05

The final measure included in Table 1, for the length of the essays, shows that there was a significant increase in size for both groups, with the students effectively doubling the length of their German essays across the time of the study.

**Attitudes to the study of German**

The two groups involved in this study and the other 27 students taking German III rated their abilities and interests on the dimensions described earlier, both at the start of the course and at the end. The ratings of the three groups were compared using a two way repeated analysis of variance, with Occasion constituting the repeated measure.

The only significant differences concerned

the higher ratings of the conventional group students for listening, writing and corresponding in German. These main effects reflected the tendency for members of this group to rate themselves more highly on both occasions. There were no significant Group x Occasion interactions that would have reflected differential effects of group membership across time. The pattern of results of these student ratings indicates a general similarity in views of the students in each of the three groups on this wide range of dimensions.

**Teacher questionnaire**

While the ratings of the computer group were slightly higher than those of the conventional group, none of the difference in mean ratings for the groups was significant when analysed using a Mann-Whitey non parametric procedure. The students in the two groups rated their teachers highly on each of the dimensions included in the questionnaire.

**Discursive comments**

Although the experimental students had been asked to comment both on the advantages and disadvantages of computer-assisted teaching as compared to the language classes they had been used to in the past, their responses were overwhelmingly positive. The whole group found the approach interesting and valuable, and everyone commented on the fact that they liked gaining computer skills at the same time as improving their German. One student pointed out that working on a terminal encouraged writing because editing was easier, and another

**Table 3** Means and standard deviations for ratings of teacher characteristics

Measure	Computer Group		Conventional group	
	M	SD	M	SD
Effectiveness	6.13	0.35	5.86	0.89
Organisation	6.37	0.52	6.00	1.15
Concern	6.38	0.52	6.00	0.82
Enthusiasm	6.00	0.93	6.00	1.15
Participation	5.75	1.17	5.71	1.11
Interest	5.13	1.13	4.43	0.79
Clarity	5.89	0.83	5.71	1.11

er liked the fact that students were able to work at their own pace while dealing with the same materials and addressing the same question. The advantage most extensively commented on by all students was being able to look at other people's work. They enjoyed the co-operative nature of producing work and felt that they learnt not only from their own mistakes, but also from those of the other participants. All students but one were sure that their German had improved as a result and two stated that they found this approach especially beneficial for the learning of grammar. One student also felt that it was valuable to know the standard of the rest of the class.

The disadvantages mentioned had mainly to do with technical problems. Two students felt that time had been wasted, and a further two thought that the physical set-up of the room hindered communication. In terms of learning German, there were only two negative comments. Both times the student felt that grammar had not been taught explicitly enough in this approach. The following is a typical response taken at random:

I have found this system of learning quite beneficial. It is a new and dynamic way of teaching which possesses many attributes. Not only does one have the advantage of learning from one's own mistakes but there is the opportunity of learning from the errors of others as well. So often when receiving back a corrected piece of work the mark is looked at but the actual mistakes are disregarded, therefore more often than not it is those same errors which re-appear time and time again. By typing in the relevant incorrect paragraphs from (everyone's work) and discussing them, I have been able to retain a better understanding of more complex grammatical concepts for longer. The use of computers makes a good change from text books and I am slowly overcoming my fear of these modern day monsters! Although it is sometimes tedious (computer work) I feel I have a good grasp of the basics now which has helped me understand and show an interest in our new computer at home (which my parents are most pleased about!).

## Discussion

The central question addressed in this project was whether computers are a helpful addition to the armoury of teachers of writing. The limi-

tations – particularly limitations of time and exposure – inherent in a small-scale pilot project tackling the area of advanced writing skills where progress is difficult to achieve, do not allow confident conclusions to be drawn. Even so, the results were encouraging enough to suggest that the approach is a fruitful one that should be pursued.

The capacity to provide instant feedback is valuable in itself, and student reactions to the approach were encouragingly positive. They reported liking the co-operative nature of the work generated within the laboratory which led to rapid completion of a task that had become in some sense communal. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, they also reported that when their own work was displayed, they did not experience this as threatening but felt distanced emotionally from what they had written and more able to treat their work objectively. In this environment, even those who had previously complained about their marks now accepted them readily.

While analysis of student attitudes toward various features of their course showed closely similar patterns of response for all students involved in third year German, the positive responses to the technology in the computer group are already good reason to explore its potential. Where the written output was concerned, results for both groups of students showed broad improvement across the period of instruction. Both groups produced a greater quantity of written German by the end of the course, and there was evidence in both groups of increasing competence in structuring a piece of writing in German. Fears about the possible harmful effects of not treating grammar systematically were not realised: there was no dramatic decrease in the rate of errors of grammar and expression, but both groups of students showed slightly lower error rates by the end of the course.

Within this general pattern of improvement, the computer-based group showed no losses in comparison with the conventional group, despite the loss of time produced by technical hitches; it improved more than the conventional group in terms of writing conclusions, though the improvement fell short of significance; and it showed a significant gain on the

major aspect of writing – the logical sequencing of ideas in the body of the essay. It can be speculated whether the computer technology itself contributed to the gain: the ability to reshape work on the screen by cutting and pasting might provide a powerful focus on structure, with the clean script printed off at the end of the class a convenient record of what had been achieved in group discussion.

Given the structure of this study in which teacher and method were combined, it is important to consider the strength of the view that the observed effects simply reflected the influence of the teachers. While this explanation cannot be completely discounted, it seems unlikely that teacher effects were the most powerful influence on student performance. The evidence provided by analysis of the detailed student ratings of the two teachers, together with the attitude data, suggest that the outcomes were not simply associated with teacher effects. Both teachers were rated highly by their students and the analysis of these ratings did not reveal any statistically significant differences on any of the seven dimensions.

Taken together, these results show the computer-based course emerging from this trial with a positive rating. At the very least, the computer-based treatment of student writing in German provides a viable alternative means of instruction. It did not require increased instructional time and was not associated with any negative ratings by students. More importantly, not only was there no evidence from measures of the quality of student writing that the computer-based group was disadvantaged in any way, but it showed significant gains over the conventional group in the central writing task of presenting an argument.

We therefore suggest that the findings of this study support further exploration of the potential of interactive software for the teaching of writing.

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# Looking up in anger: translation practice in the CALL lab<sup>1</sup>

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Final-year translation teaching in the Italian department at the University of Hull involves modules using a computer-based methodology from Italian into English. These modules are taught using *TransIt-TIGER* and *TransLit-TIGER*, in the forms in which they are commercially available.<sup>2</sup> The aim of our courses is to use technology in order to enhance the quality of training in translation. The modules are conceived of as a move beyond traditional practice towards a type of teaching model which may be more relevant to best practices in the translation profession. Indeed it may well hasten more students beyond the noise of interlanguage to the quiddities of idiom.

In this paper, it is my intention to discuss some of the problems of undergraduate translation teaching, to report on how we have tried to deal with these problems in the CALL lab and to look at some benefits of our solutions.

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is a transcript of a presentation at the Educational Technology in Language Learning 6 conference, held in Coventry on 6/7 December 1995 (see page 31 for full report).

<sup>2</sup>*TransIt-TIGER* and *TransLit-TIGER* are produced by the TELL Consortium, and are available from Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH.

## Traditional practice

It is well known that tuition in grammar and translation has long formed the backbone of language teaching in universities and schools. Generally speaking, the cornerstones of traditional practice as it relates to translation teaching are the following:

- i. students translate out of their native language into another language;
- ii. text types set for translation are usually literary in nature (extracts from novels and short stories);
- iii. translations are prepared as homework, corrected by the teacher and then discussed in class.

There are of course plenty of good reasons why this *modus operandi* should have such an enduring appeal. It would be easy not to challenge the wisdom of setting translation tasks as homework. Challenges to the *status quo* often tend to be met with one or more of the following points. Translations done at home provide material for discussion in the class, which is a useful forum presided over by the expert who is in a position to point out mistakes and give guidance. Surely having students translate in class is a waste of valuable

time, and it even encourages copying! The choice of literary texts reflects the fact that these texts exhibit the most cultivated features of a language. By translating into the non-native language, students apply the knowledge of grammar and structure which they have learned in a more artificial context.

Regarding the choices of text type, it is often true that literary language is more elegant and cultivated than other areas of discourse, but just why that should make it more suitable material for translation seems not so much a self-evident fact as a position for which a case must be argued. The traditional model *can* produce lively discussion and can be positive in terms of student learning, but this is simply not always the case. Such classes may be ineffective for a number of reasons, most of which have to do with the institutional focus of the model. It does not take into account individual students' strengths and weaknesses. Thus, better students may resent quality time spent in the resolution of problems which are for them no problem at all. At the other extreme, weaker students may be reluctant to ask questions for fear of peer ridicule. Models with an institutional focus tend to establish tensions within all but the best balanced groups. The net result is often a fragmentation of concentration levels with consequent deleterious effects on the learning experience.

Quite aside from the group dynamics argument, traditional translation-teaching practice has, for quite a while now, been open to criticisms which include the following:

- i. it does not give students a useful insight into translation practice in the real world
- ii. standards of assessment and evaluation are usually *ad hoc*, reflecting the conflicting objectives of language learning and training in translation skills as distinct pedagogical activities
- iii. there often seems to exist an unspoken bias against engaging in any kind of theoretical debate on the nature of translation.

I will deal with these criticisms in the remainder of the paper.

## The professional model

The following is, I think, a reasonably faithful account of how translators function in the market-place of Babel:

- i. translators rarely, if ever, work into a language other than their native one;
- ii. professional translators work against the clock;
- iii. it is almost impossible for a professional translator to work exclusively on literary texts. For reasons technological (e.g. user manuals), politico-economic (e.g. international organisations) and commercial (multinational organisations), translation is now an integral part of the document handling process which fuels mass communication. The typical text types of mass communication are not novels and short stories but technical user manuals whether on-screen and hard copy (e.g. software localisation, automobile manuals), reports or speeches or memoranda (either for internal consumption in EU, UN, NATO, etc. or for public consumption) and advertising slogans;
- iv. as most texts which require translation are informative in their intent and technical in their content, translators need to have internalised a model of translation practice and acquired a mastery over huge quantities of (often transient) terminology in at least two languages. This latter implies that:
  - a. printed bilingual dictionaries are usually just a distraction
  - b. printed monolingual dictionaries are only little better
  - c. translators must have information retrieval skills
 which requires confidence in handling computers to access information from:
  - on-line data sources
  - computer-based dictionaries and encyclopaedias
  - e-mailing colleagues/clients
- v. post-editing/correcting of draft translations is required

- a. by the translator, and
- b. by a senior editor (ideally a subject expert).

## Towards an accommodation

In our experience of final-year students, four types of translation problem occur with significant frequency in translation training:

- i. failure to recognise ‘false friends’;
- ii. simple lack of grammatical knowledge (in one or more language);
- iii. an inability to take an overview, to look beyond the words to the logical coherence underlying the text;
- iv. inadequate expressive skills in the target language.

Combined, these problems often lead students to translate too literally, imposing syntactic structures from the source language onto the target language, which recoils in horror from such manipulation.

We start from the assumption that translation is rather more than a language learning exercise. Our course, let me reiterate, is for Finalists who have spent the previous year in Italy. They are required to translate from Italian into English. There are, however, usually some Italian ERASMUS students taking part in the classes too. Their presence enhances the translation process as dialogue begins spontaneously between native speakers of the two languages, and this is, in fact, a feature of what tends to happen in the professional world of translation: when in doubt, good translators consult people with expert knowledge.

Concerning text types, we still include literary texts because (i) they are often more satisfying to translate, and more importantly (ii) insights gained from translating literary texts are often transferable to other text types (e.g. metaphor, irony, hyperbole, etc.). That said, at least half of the course is given over to technical texts, and this requires extensive on-line glossary provision for the attendant technical terminology.

On the time factor, students work in class (over two sessions) and the texts become rather longer and more difficult as the course progresses, with the result that the students become faster. *TransIt-TIGER* and *TransLit-TIGER* are available on the university network and so in theory students can work on the translations outside of class time but they know that their exam at the end of the semester will be in the class format, i.e. sitting at a computer terminal, working against the clock. For this reason, they are encouraged to develop their skills and to increase their confidence in using a computer for translation and post-editing.

The sessions take place in the CALL lab with students, some in pairs at one computer, but most on their own in front of a networked terminal. Here they find a split screen with the source text in one window and a blank window awaiting their attempt. They can also access hints and a glossary, and when they have produced their own version (or at the lecturer's discretion) they may access two different (and imperfect) versions of the same text. While all this activity is in progress, the lecturer is free to assume the role of the roving tutor, dealing with individual problems as they arise. The arrangement allows people to work at their own pace and have their individual difficulties resolved one-to-one, but, if there is a general problem, the lecturer/tutor is in a position to nip it in the bud, resorting to the whiteboard where necessary to sort out the problem, thus saving time. The practical sessions are periodically interspersed with seminars in which we discuss issues which have emerged and/or engage in some practical contrastive stylistics on appropriate parallel texts supplied by the lecturer.

Students spend two sessions on each assignment. At the end of the first session they print their draft version which is lightly marked, using an agreed set of editorial lines and symbols, and returned at the start of the second session. Sometimes, for variation, in the second session students edit a colleague's first draft. The final version (regardless of who produced the first draft) is the one which receives the grade.

## Benefits

We operate in the light of two significant and interrelated factors. The number of students going through the university system in these islands has grown enormously over the past two decades and a languages and literature degree, important though it undoubtedly is in terms of one's personal culture, is no automatic route to gainful employment. We operate in the age of transferable skills. With this in mind, the computer-based translation modules have some wider, practical aims which include giving Arts students the opportunity to gain confidence with using new technology and giving them a salutary insight into the best practices of the translation industry. In practical terms, students are not slow to grasp the benefits of having no set homework (and the more diligent among them use this time to read more widely in the

field of translation studies than would be possible in the traditional model – not to mention the professional model!). It can also reduce tutors' marking-time, given that silly mistakes can be eliminated as they crop up in the lab session.

At the very least the students will leave us aware of the professional model and the essential complexity of translation. We will have achieved something if we have in any way reduced the number of language graduates capable of producing in print (and owning up to!) the following type of translation, culled from the official publication of an Italian state-owned company:

"[...] A voluntary atemporal collage that contaminates every kind, also the cinema, to offer continuing suggestions on the theme and therefore postpone the hypotheses of the whole. [...]"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>Translation taken from *Il viaggio in treno*, a.1,no.2, March 1992. Translator best left anonymous.

# Exploratory teaching of grammar rules and CALL

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*Manning<sup>1</sup> argued that exploratory teaching is well suited to learning with computers, as it increases the learners' autonomy and motivation. The main thrust of this paper is to evaluate the merits of exploratory teaching of grammatical rules as opposed to the more traditional explicit or implicit approaches. It provides a brief description of tests carried out on a group of learners of French in the UK, working on gender agreement rules, using a specifically designed CALL program and presents and analyses the results of the testing, which favour the Exploratory approach.*

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## Introduction

When analysing current approaches in the UK to the teaching of syntax and the formal structures of the target language, we discover that there is a controversial debate about the value of explicit teaching of grammar rules in the acquisition of a language<sup>2, 3</sup>, with some suggesting that with the right input, acquisition takes care of itself<sup>4, 5</sup>. This has strong consequences for the teaching and learning of languages with “the importance of matters such as correct genders and agreements ... not always stressed, because it is possible to obtain a reasonable GCSE grade without observing these rules”<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, an emphasis on communication skills can lead the students to believe that accuracy is unimportant as long as the message is conveyed<sup>7, 8</sup>.

Current classroom research advocates consciousness raising of grammar rules as a pre-

ferred approach<sup>9, 10</sup>. Exploratory teaching of grammar rules is also the approach recommended by the National Curriculum for foreign languages (DES, *op. cit.*). Computers provide the ideal medium with which to experiment with exploratory teaching<sup>11</sup>. As the potential of the Exploratory approach in raising consciousness of grammar rules was yet unexplored, it seemed interesting to explore these claims experimentally, with the help of a CALL program whose design implementation and history will first be summarised briefly.

## Preliminary research

The design of the program was preceded by an error analysis of GCSE exam scripts<sup>12</sup>, which identified gender attribution and gender agreement as one of the problematic areas for the acquisition of French by English native speak-

ers. Many errors were found involving the determiner-noun, adjective-noun agreement, vowel elision and preposition-determiner contraction rules and any combination of these rules.

This error analysis was followed by a detailed study of the French gender system which stressed the importance of morphology and of the grammatical context in the acquisition of both gender assignment and agreement<sup>13,14</sup>. Differences in the way the feature gender was being processed by these two groups of learners became apparent, with the French native speakers processing gender as an integral feature of the noun whereas the native speakers of English learned the determiner as a separate lexical item. Lack of emphasis on gender and gender agreement is often reflected in the teaching delivered in the UK as gender is not considered as important for native speakers of English<sup>15</sup>, since it only plays a minor role in comparison to word order in the English language, with unfortunate consequences in the performance of English speaking second language learners.

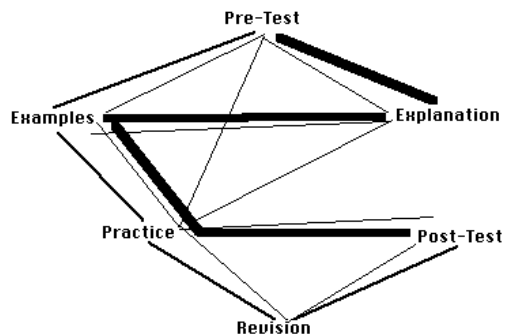
As this research involved mainly second language learning in a naturalistic environment, i.e. Immersion classes in Canada, it was felt necessary to study and analyse the strategies used by more formal second language learners to assign the gender of words, within a determined linguistic context. Several tests were then administered to a group of learners: a vocabulary learning test, a pattern recognition test, two gender assignment tests, one without a linguistic context and one with, and a grammaticality judgement test<sup>16</sup>.

These showed that, though performance was variable, learners left to themselves generally found patterns in the words they were presented with and formulated their own rules, not necessarily consistent with the target rules. However, because of the lack of guidance, some children tended to formulate the wrong rules, to develop misconceptions and to persist with these misconceptions: the use of inappropriate orthographic or phonological characteristics or of semantics to assign gender. The more successful learners arrived at the right conclusions more quickly than others, whereas

others made little progress and looked unlikely ever to arrive at the right rules unaided. This again threw doubts on the efficacy of a completely implicit approach and vindicated the need to raise a greater awareness of the syntactic dependency relationships occurring between nouns and their dependants in the sentence.

## Program implementation and description

To further our investigation, a computer program was devised, *Itsicall* (Investigating teaching strategies in CALL), with gender agreement in French as a domain, to compare the merits of implicit, explicit and exploratory teaching of three agreement rules, elision, contraction and adjective agreement. Each of the modes was formalised, as a different teaching sequence: examples, exercises and revision for the implicit mode; explanations, examples, exercises for the explicit mode; and a choice of access to either of the four components, for the exploratory mode. The program was implemented as three independent modules, one module for each rule. In each module, the learners did a number of exercises to practise the rule, and were allocated to a different mode for each of the three modules, rotating in the order, implicit, explicit and exploratory (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Different paths taken through various parts of the program in the three modes. — : implicit mode; — : exploratory mode; - - - : explicit mode

There were problems in devising the teaching sequence irrespective of the medium used for teaching. Gender assignment and agreement were predicted to be difficult concepts. The syntactic context appeared to play a vital role for native speakers of French in both gender assignment and agreement, and therefore it was vital to raise the awareness of such a context in non-native speakers. The sentences chosen in the program reflected this identified need. The syntactic structures used for the description of the physical attributes of the animals were:

- Voici un/une (ADJECTIVE) (ANIMAL).
- Voici la tête d... ( ANIMAL).
- Le/ la/ l'/les ... (ANIMAL) a un(e)/des (ADJECTIVE)(e) (PART).
- Le/la/l'/Les (PART) du/de la/de l' (ANIMAL) est/sont (ADJECTIVE).

which could then be used and re-used in all the parts of the program, as appropriate.

Less structure was implanted into the design of the agreement module. This is also the module in which the learners in all modes did the worst. It was predicted that the learners would need to differentiate between masculine and feminine forms, and be able to use these in the plural. Some of the sentences used deliberately gave few clues as to the gender of the head noun, on which the gender of the adjective is based. Unless the learners had some alternative way to look up the gender of the word or remembered it, from a previous encounter, they would have no other alterna-

tive than to guess, as in Figure 2, where the gender of *cornes* cannot be deduced from the linguistic context. This type of sentence caused expected problems to the learners.

This program was then tested on a set of 30 learners in secondary schools, who came from three different schools, had been taught differently and therefore showed great variations in performance and initial knowledge. To measure rigorously the progress made by each learner, both individually and globally, identical pre- and post-tests were administered to each learner in each of the modules and each of the modes. The test answers were recorded electronically and manually and a careful record kept of the reactions of the learners to the various features of the program.

## Results

A detailed account of the recording methods used to collect data and examples of learner performance in the form of two case studies was presented in Manning<sup>17</sup>. This data was then analysed both in quantitative and in qualitative terms. The quantitative analysis was based on the improvement measure, a formula obtained for measuring the progress made by each of the learners in each of the modes and modules; the percentage of successful learners in each of the modes and modules; the time taken to complete a practice and the number of questions answered during that practice. The qualitative analysis used records of the answers given by the learners, the scripts from the interviews and the problems encountered by the learners and any other observations made during the session.

All modes achieved some degree of success, but the results obtained differed according to the mode, the group and the module. Therefore they were normalised on the Elision module and group X, which was the group showing least variation in performance over the three teaching modes (see Table 1 and Figure 3).

The Exploratory mode generally fared better than the other two:

- it was the mode in which the learners

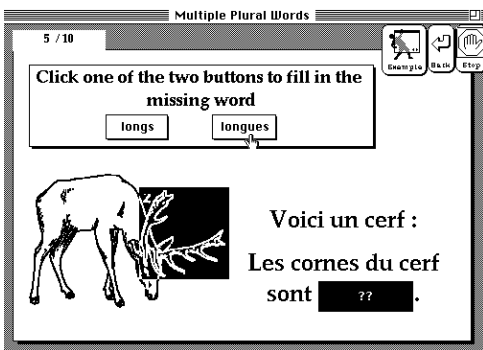
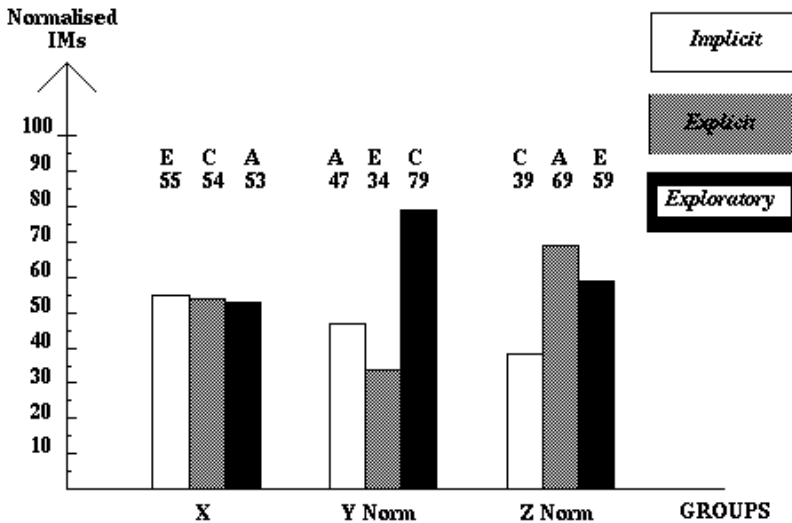


Figure 2 Example of problematic agreement sentence

**Table 1** Average improvements rates (normalised)

Modes / Modules	Group X		Group Y		Group Z		Averages	
	Norm	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm	Raw		
IMPLICIT	55		47	(28)	39	(50)	47	(43)
EXPLICIT	54		34	(20)	69	(89)	50	(49)
EXPLORATORY	53		79	(47)	59	(76)	65	(58)
AVERAGES	54		54	(32)	54	(70)	50	(50)

**Figure 3** Comparison of groups and modes after normalisation

achieved a higher improvement score (see Table 1 and Figure 3):

- it was faster and more efficient than the other two, as learners working in the Exploratory mode usually needed to see fewer cards and spent less time doing the exercises, while achieving a higher improvement score (see Table 2).

**Table 2** Average time taken per session and number of cards visited by learners overall

Modes	Implicit	Explicit	Exploratory
Practice Times	25'	24'	21'
Cards Seen	76	70	68

- it was also better in terms of rule acquisition, as more learners were able to formulate the correct rules after working in the Exploratory mode (see Table 3).
- it was generally considered as more flexible and enjoyable by the learners.

However, it created difficulties in navigation and decision making, and was more suitable for more successful learners with more developed learning strategies. It outperformed the others in one topic, elision. It would therefore be useful to train the learners in using all the exploratory facilities, making sure they were equipped with the appropriate learning strategies.

**Table 3** Correct/incorrect rule formulation in the three modes

Rule Knowledge		Implicit	Explicit	Exploratory
Pre test	incorrect rules	17%	16%	17%
	correct rules	7%	8%	10%
Post test	incorrect rules	0%	16%	17%
	correct rules	27%	46%	66%
Changes	incorrect rules	+ 13%	---	---
	correct rules	+ 20%	+ 40%	+ 56 %

Moreover, the results also show that the Exploratory mode may not suit all learners as, in most cases, when faced with a more difficult topic such as adjective agreement, the percentage of successful learners drops and the explicit mode becomes more effective (see Table 4).

The Implicit mode worked reasonably well, except for the most difficult topic, agreement. However, it created more confusion, especially with the less able learners, was less efficient in terms of time and work covered, and led to the formulation of a greater number of incorrect hypotheses. Therefore the Implicit mode should be used with caution, to avoid confusion and the unnecessary formation of incorrect hypotheses, and to maximise the efficiency of the program.

The Explicit mode was the most successful and the safest for most learners in two of the topics, contraction and agreement, but less efficient in terms of global improvement score, time and learning outcome. It had proved less challenging than the other two, though more reassuring and familiar for the less successful learners. It was less popular than the other two in most cases.

The Exploratory and Implicit modes were more favoured by the learners for their chal-

lenging, game-like character. The Exploratory mode got most learners' votes as their preferred module was done in the Exploratory mode 11/24 (46%), followed by the Explicit mode 8/24 (32%) and the Implicit mode 5/24 (21%). The Exploratory mode, which gave the learners more freedom and access to the explanations was the preferred mode for most, except for unfamiliar or difficult material. Many learners greatly enjoyed guessing and discovering for themselves, but on the whole found it harder, less efficient and preferred to have more guidance and explanations. Seldom was the Explicit mode found more interesting or exciting, but some learners appeared to prefer to work within a well-defined framework in which they know what to do.

The program unfortunately did not succeed in eliminating the learners' misconceptions in any of the modes. When analysing qualitatively the learning occurring during the interaction with the program, we found similar misconceptions and problems to those uncovered in the earlier part of the research: focusing initially on the beginning of words, making the adjective agree with the nearest noun, and semantic misconceptions, some of which were persistent.

The following example shows the errors

**Table 4** Percentage of successful learners in each of the modes and modules

MODES	Elision	Contraction	Agreement	Overall
IMPLICIT	82	90	62	71
EXPLICIT	73	90	86	83
EXPLORATORY..	90	75	63	75

made by a good learner and provides a possible explanation for these errors (the student input is underlined) :

- (1) *Le raton-laveur a des yeux (noir) noirs.*  
 (3) *V.....: le pingouin a un (grosses) gros corps.*  
 (4) *Le merle a un corps (noirs) noir.*  
 (6) *L'épervier a un (petits) petit bec.'*

- in (1) the animal is masculine and *yeux* does not end with an *s*, and therefore does not look plural. (One would have to look at *des* for a clue).
- in (3) this time, the governing noun, *corps* ends with an *s*. Moreover, the learner has been constantly puzzled by the forms taken by this irregular adjective, but could have assigned the ending *es* by proximity.
- in (4), again, the same word re-appears and a similar error, which may be attributed to the *s* at the end of *corps*, which the learner may have thought to be a plural word because it ended in *s*.
- in (6), this time, the learner chooses the wrong answer, for no apparent reason, except perhaps an over-generalisation of the previous rule.

This series of errors appears to suggest that the learner has problems identifying the head noun. From her later remarks, when responding to questions, it became clear that the learner's main problem was identifying the word to focus on in the sentence, i.e. connecting the head noun and the adjective and working out its gender, especially when the word order of the noun phrase structure differed from English, as predicted earlier.

These problems and misconceptions were not unique and occurred in quite a number of cases. This example demonstrates how difficult it is to explain or predict all the errors without actually asking the learner, and to make the program more intelligent. As already discussed in Laurillard and Manning<sup>18</sup>, the error categorisation and prediction necessary for effective student modelling is still an intractable problem.

This may mean that different strategies

would have to be adopted to challenge the learners' misconceptions. First, a deeper analysis of pupils' answers and a comparison of their errors with their correct answers would be needed, to establish what they can and cannot do. Restructuring the linguistic content of the questions might allow us to test our predictions about likely misconceptions. In the case of the previous example, we could devise a supplementary set of questions containing contradictory evidence in the implicit mode, or a piece of advice about re-consulting the rule, or an error message in the other modes. Once common errors have been identified, they could then be tested and challenged by the program.

## Conclusion

The current study shows that Exploratory teaching of grammar rules has great potential, especially when used with computers. Though not a panacea, it certainly seems to be more effective in terms of time taken to understand and assimilate a particular rule and has a place in foreign language teaching. Implicit teaching appears not as beneficial as more explicit approaches, as it can lead to more misconceptions. Pupils not performing significantly better in the Exploratory mode either lacked learning strategies or used this mode as an Implicit one.

The results of this study also suggest that different learners may benefit from different modes for different topics and that programs should be more adaptive to the needs of the learners. Particular attention should be given to helping the learners develop appropriate learning strategies and to guiding them into using the facilities offered by the program to the full, especially when working in the Exploratory mode. Furthermore, the more difficult the rules and the less able the learners, the more important it is to provide a structured framework in which to practise the rules and make these rules as explicit and as transparent as possible, to avoid unnecessary misconceptions. Perhaps the best solution for teachers would be to try and use induction for easy and

well-defined rules, and train the learners to develop their own discovery and learning strategies for easy problems. More difficult rules might need building up and structuring and the preconditions for applications of these rules might have to be more transparent.

This experimental testing of the teaching strategies vindicates the recommendations of the National Curriculum for an exploratory approach to the teaching of grammar and greater learner autonomy. It raises further doubts about the efficacy of implicit teaching which, because it excludes conscious learning of the rules involved, may not be the best teaching strategy to use in a more formal learning environment. As shown by our results, greater improvements in learning were generally achieved when the learners were given access to the rules to be learnt.

Moreover, it shows that the computer and its exploratory potential have a great role to play in helping the learners gain greater awareness of the complex grammatical relationships existing within a sentence. However, the computer program designed was not entirely successful in raising this awareness, and research is still needed into alternative strategies to combat and eradicate misconceptions.

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# Conference Reports

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## Educational Technology in Language Learning 6 Machine Assisted Translation in Language Learning

Coventry, UK

6 & 7 December 1995

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This 'expert seminar' was organised by the CTI Centre for Modern Languages, University of Hull in association with the Centre for Information Technology in Language Learning, Coventry University. It was the sixth in a series of expert seminars for invited participants introduced by the CTI Centre for Modern Languages in 1990.

The seminar programme included speakers involved in professional translation and speakers involved in teaching and research in higher education, and provided a forum for discussion between the two groups.

Marco Bruzzoni of MultiLingua gave a presentation entitled *What the Professionals are Using* in which he outlined the types of software available and gave examples. He distinguished between Machine Translation Systems such as *PC Translator* and *Globalink Power Translator*, which are still the option often chosen by business men despite advice to the contrary, and Machine Assisted Translation Tools. These include translation aids to

support the professional translator, such as electronic dictionaries, reference materials, and glossary managers such as *Multiterm*. He described the approach taken by translation memory software, in which previous human translations are stored and reaccessed by the software on subsequent occasions using fuzzy matching. *Trados Translator's Workbench II* was demonstrated as an example of a 'toolkit' for the modern translator, incorporating a translation memory feature. Factors to be considered in the evaluation of such systems were set out in a case study provided by Adriane Rinsche of the Language Technology Centre Ltd.

Two other presentations looked in more detail at certain types of software described above. Peter Kwan of Praetorius described and demonstrated IBM's *Translation Manager*, which is a set of tools which include an online dictionary and translation memory facility. The user is presented with online proposals of exact and near-exact translations from a translation memory, and the system allows creation of an initial translation memory from previous human translations. Repetitive technical translations are particularly suitable for this approach, which is designed to increase the throughput of a professional translator. IBM originally developed *Translation Manager* for 'in-house' use, to effect a saving of 20% on the cost of translators.

Graham Davies of Thames Valley University described one of the simplest and cheapest machine translation packages available, *Language Assistant*, and demonstrated the German version. It is a rule-based system which

has the capacity to ask for further information from the user. Its shortcomings were illustrated, and then ways in which it could be useful in a teaching situation were discussed. It could serve as an introduction to students as to what is on the market, giving them confidence that professional translators will still be needed and enabling them to give advice on the use of such systems. In practical terms it could be used for composition, being an interactive word processor with dictionary look-up facility including inflection for verbs and grammar notes.

Tony Hartley, University of Brighton, provided a general view of the functionality of MT systems and the use of such tools for language learning in a presentation entitled *Can Machine Assisted Translation Assist Language Learning?* He concluded by emphasising that MT systems are not designed as tutors for language learning, nor as partners or a medium for language learning, but that plausible roles such systems might play in language learning include

*Informant:* students can inspect the lexicon in a dynamic environment

*Stimulant:* shortcomings can provoke discussion

*Tool:* good for exploring models of translation and real world translation.

Feasible activities suggested included sub-language analyses, comparative evaluation of MT systems, and designing evaluations.

During later discussions Tony outlined a forthcoming project in which students were to translate software documentation provided by computer science students at a linked institution in France, and these translations were to be validated by English computer science students at Brighton.

The remaining presentations dealt with the use of tools for teaching translation and focused on the *TransIt-TIGER* programs produced by the TELL Consortium with HE funding under the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme. Patrick Corness, Coventry University, gave an account of the development of a parent program, *TIGER* (Translating Industrial German) and described the functionality of the program, which provided a

series of source texts with associated glossaries, translation hints and model translations. He then outlined the methodology behind *TransIt*, as developed by Doug and June Thompson at the University of Hull, using word processing for teaching translation. This involved providing source texts electronically together with questions on the text and eventual access to two alternative, rather than model, translations, in the light of which students could improve upon their original translation. The TLTP project had provided funding to merge this methodology with the existing *TIGER* program and produce a series of programs for various language pairs, and an authoring shell.

Doug Thompson, University of Hull, followed with an account of his dissatisfaction with traditional classroom methods of teaching translation and the requirements any replacement methodology should meet. These included individual tuition, students working at their own pace, access to grammatical, syntactical and lexical guidance, source and target language acquisition, and acquisition of basic translation skills. The *TransIt* methodology involves two sessions on each source text, the first in which the student does an unseen translation and in which problems with the source language are faced, and a second session, essentially post-editing with access to two alternative translations, in which problems with the target language are dealt with. Students become responsible for their own time management, and the teacher can see mistakes in the making and is available as a learning resource. Although developed in a teaching situation the *TransIt-TIGER* programs can be used for self-access, and have been used by pairs of students to generate discussion, and in examinations.

George Talbot, University of Hull, in a presentation entitled *Looking up in Anger – Translation Practice in the CALL Lab*, contrasted traditional translation practice with translation in the real world, where translators are working against the clock, translate technical, legal and commercial documents requiring specialised terminology and need to be able to use computers and information retrieval skills. He went on to describe the practicalities of

using the *TransIt-TIGER* programs with students and suggested that they gained confidence from the use of the technology, gained an insight into the translation industry and were more willing to discuss complexities in the translation process. In addition they benefited from having no homework to do, and the tutor could reduce his marking time<sup>1</sup>.

Several enlightening discussions were generated during the conference. Real world problems translators face were highlighted, including the lack of translators for some language pairs so that not always possible to translate into the native language of the translator. Problems of not knowing the language in a specialised field but also not knowing the concepts behind it were mentioned. The need for the translator to demand information from the client where necessary was regarded as important but often neglected, and drawings could often be of help where conceptual difficulties were involved.

Participants from the translation profession felt the approach to teaching translation represented by the contributors from the field of education was a valid one and regretted that not all educational institutions took this approach. Students must be prepared to accept changes in what was a particularly fast moving field.

**Jenny Parsons**  
CTI CML and the TELL Consortium,  
University of Hull

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<sup>1</sup>See pages 22–23 for a full version of this paper.

## Multiple Media for Language Learning

University of Stirling, Scotland  
25–27 January 1996

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The title of this conference, organised by Scottish CILT, was deliberately provocative and designed to focus attention on the various definitions and implications of the use of new technologies in language learning: ‘multimedia’ may be fashionable, but does it work? The

conference attracted around 90 participants, many from schools and colleges in Scotland, but including also those from the higher education sector and other institutions.

Presenters were asked to address three themes: access to the target language, use of the target language, and the acquisition of knowledge of the structures and vocabulary of the target language. There was a mixture of plenary and parallel sessions, including both talks and workshops. The following comments represent one participant’s reaction to a small selection of these.

**Nina Garrett, Director, CTW Mellon Project, Wesleyan University, Connecticut**

*Technology as bridge between teaching language and research on language acquisition*  
Professor Garrett put forward the proposition that, whilst we may think students’ linguistic performance is enhanced by the use of computer-based materials, we really have no idea of ‘what is going on inside their heads’. The capabilities of computers really ought to be harnessed so that (with their permission) students’ activity whilst using such materials can be tracked, and the data from such tracking can be analysed to draw out conclusions about how language learning takes place.

**Charles Jennings, Director of CECOMM, Southampton Institute**

*Telematics and language learning: the new frontier*

Professor Jennings described a prototype ‘classroom without walls’, addressing the potential impact on the process of language learning, based on his involvement in major telematics-based projects. Whilst the use of these existing technologies is currently prohibitively expensive, a glimpse of possible future trends was offered, and it was encouraging to learn that ‘real people’ were regarded as an integral part of such electronic environments.

**Stephen Hagen, Centre for Modern Languages, The Open University**

*Multimedia: can it really satisfy the needs of open language learners?*

This presentation gave a down-to-earth per-

spective on the experiences, perceptions and expectations of new technologies, based on research carried out by the OU into precisely which media learners felt were useful to them. The theme of access to the foreign language was echoed in the set of statistics presented, which showed the proportions of students having access to computers, video recorders, and audio-cassette players. It was pointed out that in some homes, even where a computer is in place, parents may have to compete with their children for access to it – and busy commuters may still prefer to use their travelling time to practise listening skills on a cassette-player.

**Mike Harland, Glasgow University**

*Putting fun into course books with interactive courseware*

This presentation provided plenty of examples of the ‘fun element’ in multimedia courseware for Portuguese: the recorded groans in the ‘accident’ scenario, as the victim was hoisted into the ambulance were truly multilingual! Students are required to carry out ‘tasks’ relating to the scenarios by responding to situations and making choices, which involves elements of increased motivation as well as being more fun than some of the more ‘traditional’ computer-based activities. The more serious language learning focus was demonstrated by the fact that the accompanying book contained a page-for-page text version of the scenario, with accompanying vocabulary and grammar notes.

**Sue Hewer, Scottish CILT/LTDI Heriot-Watt for HarperCollins**

*Reading strategies and graded texts on CD-ROM*

This talk and demonstration allowed participants an insight into the thinking behind the development of *Autolire*, *Lectura* and *Lesen* – packages which exploit CD-ROM technology to help students to develop successful reading strategies and the desire to read for pleasure. As an ‘open-ended’ system, which encourages initiative on the part of students rather than providing answers, this requires a fresh approach on the part of teachers who may be familiar with other computer-based materials that provide text-based activities.

The conference also included an exhibition area and a session for software demonstrations. As the occasion was billed as the Scottish launch of materials from the TELL consortium, it was gratifying to see considerable interest in the TELL products at these events. Unfortunately the weather intervened on the Saturday morning with blizzard conditions, so that most of the workshops, including ours, had to be abandoned as everyone made a dash to get away from Stirling whilst the roads were still open! However, the Burns Night supper and entertainment the previous evening had duly fortified us all, and the conference will certainly go down as a memorable event.

**June Thompson  
CTICML and the TELL Consortium,  
University of Hull**

# Software Reviews

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## Up to Standard in French

Authors: Joyce Carter and Ghislaine Plus

Hardware requirements: PC386 or better (486 recommended), VGA graphics, 256 Colours, 640x480, CD-ROM drive, Sound card, Speakers, Microphone, 4MB RAM (8MB recommended), at least 5MB free hard disk space.

Available from: Mast Learning Systems Ltd.

Price: Single licence £350.0; site licence £950.00.

### **Intended Use/Area of Application**

The software package provided consisted of a CD-ROM, an audio cassette, a workbook and a get started book containing keys to the interactive material.

*Up To Standard in French* is clearly intended for 'complete beginners' interested in learning business and vocational French up to UK National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Levels 1 and 2. Its programme of study is designed to help users learn and practise the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The course comprises ten units specifically conceived to represent the finite language progression from *ab initio* level in unit 1 to NVQ level 2 in unit 10. Each unit is based on two central dialogues stemming from selected everyday business situations and topics earmarked by the National Language Standards to NVQ Level 2. Additionally, the unit's interface contains relevant cultural information, vocabulary, notes and

tips as well as practice material and diagnostic tests.

The program is designed for supported self-study and therefore provides cultural information, explanations, translations as well as support and practice material ensuring satisfactory self-access. However, users are warned that some of the exercises linked to writing and speaking cannot be completed adequately without the help of a tutor, as it is important to assess the degree of accuracy of answers whilst checking the validity of alternatives.

### **Ease of Use**

*Up To Standard in French* is a standard Windows-based package which presents a familiar interface with the use of easily recognisable conventions and controls, such as the pop-up dialogue box with its control-menu box, title bar and minimise button, pushbuttons and radio buttons.

Clear instructions are provided to install, load and access the software whilst useful suggestions are made in the Introduction and Quick Start sections to enable users to develop their own mental model of the structure, content and potential of the user interface.

A consistent display of standardised command buttons provides users with navigational facilities to move from frame to frame either between or within units. Progression is essentially linear insofar as users can either click on Move on to go to the next imposed or selected frame or click on Exit to go back to the previous frame. A permanent, useful, on-line Help button is similarly displayed. It presents the screen-based contents of the application and provides users with a standard interface including facilities such as Search, Back and History.

### **User Interaction**

Strategically, the user interaction is designed to direct users from the Front Screen to the Password Screen, to register a personalised password, to the Course Menu Screen, displaying all ten units and finally to individual Unit Menu Screens.

Tactically, the unit-based user interaction is designed to intervene at three clearly distinct levels. Firstly, the main area of the screen displays and emphasises the three essential activities offered in each unit which are: Dialogue A, Dialogue B and Check Your Progress. Secondly, four functions at the top of the screen, underneath the title bar, give users access to the following additional information: Tips which suggests specific ways to interact with the software and Vocabulary, Notes and Cultural Information which provide the unit's background linguistic and cultural information. Finally, users can go back to the previous frame or exit the application by using the control-menu box. Therefore, aside from the guidance recommending sequences of activities and the data providing specific references, the units user interaction is fundamentally based on the Dialogue mode and the exercises in the Check your Progress mode. The Dialogue interface enables users to (a) Listen to the dialogue with the help of screen permutations and

combinations based on text display, run modes and role selection, (b) Practise with the provided recording facility and (c) Review the recorded material. In turn, the Check your Progress interface enables users to put their newly acquired knowledge to the test with the Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing tasks related to the relevant units and clearly set according to Levels 1 & 2 of the National Language Standards. These self-tests come with a scoring device giving both the unit and the overall scores for self-assessment and speculative motivation.

### **Screen Layout**

The screen layout is generally clear and well presented whilst design considerations have overwhelmingly led to the adoption of a traditional, well tested, solid and consistent interface. Indeed this no-nonsense, no-gimmick approach is somewhat reminiscent of existing dialogue-based applications emphasising the educational nature and *raison d'être* of the software as opposed to its entertainment or so-called edutainment value.

As previously mooted, the display of commands follows accepted and recognised design standards such as size, colour, function as well as general appearance when enabled and disabled. Similarly, units and their specific activities are clearly displayed on the screen as well as being enhanced by the use of distinctive and colourful pictures. This graphic approach is all the more apparent in the Dialogue mode when pictures are prominently and consistently used to highlight the duality and interactive nature of the discussion between the protagonists.

However, a more critical examination of the user interface is bound to find the initially promising interactive capability of such a multimedia interface somewhat disappointing especially when compared with the forthcoming generation of interactive multimedia applications now appearing onto the market, combining all the above functions with animation, voice recognition and video clips.

### **Pedagogical Context**

If *Up to Standard* shows its weakness with an old-fashioned design approach it similarly

gains in strength with the adoption of clearly established levels of educational attainment and a well-thought-out, though possibly technologically limited, pedagogical approach. Customised linguistic and cultural support material as well as new diagnostic tests have undoubtedly enhanced the program's educational value.

Users are constantly and consistently given the opportunity to access domain-specific information, advice and navigational guidance, suggesting a number of appropriate routes, with a view to increasing the general adaptability and applicability of the software to the different levels of linguistic competence targeted by the programme.

Additionally, the introduction of interactive exercises within the application certainly helps to distinguish it from its competitors. This innovation, by stimulating user interaction and ultimately the user's linguistic performance, must be seen as an important asset. However, it ought to be pointed out that the ambitious nature of these tests, especially in the speaking mode which relies on self-assessment, somehow blurs the recommended access mode. In doing so, the user interface design finds itself uncomfortably astride both a clearly identified and targeted self-access mode of language learning and a class- or tutorial-based approach requiring the necessary help of an experienced tutor.

### Overall Performance

The package, tested on a much faster processor than the minimum system configuration recommended, performed well within the functionality it offered and generally corresponded well with what was expected of it.

However, by approaching the language learning process via the four identified language skills, the interface seems to be emphasising the unit-based or tactical interactive approach as opposed to the strategic dimension one would have expected of such an application. As a result, the linear navigation between frames can be frustratingly slow and, similarly, the linguistic progression between units is not always as evident as it should be.

### Strong Points

- a clearly identified and defined user group;
- an educationally purposeful user interaction;
- an interesting and innovative range of oral and written self-assessed exercises;
- a clear, uncluttered and consistent screen display;
- a well designed and proficient on-line Help;
- a professionally-produced package.

### Weak Points

#### *the screen layout:*

- a well tried and tested user interface design but markedly old-fashioned and not as attractive as it could be;
- wrong and misleading choice of word on button: 'Exit' does not and should not indicate a move back to the previous screen.

#### *the user interaction:*

- the navigation is too linear and therefore limited, especially at the structural level. As a result users are not sufficiently encouraged to relate to and compare units with a view to appreciating and quantifying the real value of the progression, ideally based on linguistic criteria and not the nature of topics.

#### *the functionality:*

- users should be able to access more on-screen information related to specific syntactic, linguistic and grammatical points as well as cultural issues;
- a better match between functionality and usability (refer to the Speaking exercise) should be obtained to achieve greater credibility and reliability.

### Conclusion

Although *Up to Standard in French* has considerable educational potential in terms of user requirements and target levels, it fails to integrate linguistic progression within the various units. It is an expensive package, given the level of multimedia technology it represents.

**Dominique Hémard**  
**London Guildhall University**

# Business English

## 1. Introduction to a British Company, Version 1.0

## 2. Managing Quality

CALL design and material: Paul Brett; Programmer: Damien Evans; Graphics: Brian Holland; Video: Richard Woolridge; Project Management: Terry Goodison; Project Consultant: Steve Molyneux

Hardware requirements: 486 DX33MHz or faster, 8 MB of RAM, Dual speed CD-ROM drive, MCI compatible sound card (e.g. Sound Blaster), Windows 3.1 or higher with multimedia extensions.

Available from: University of Wolverhampton School of Languages and European Studies, Stafford Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1SB.

Price: £100.00 for each CD-ROM.

### Intended Use/Area of Application

These *English for Business* CD-ROMs are the first two of a series of six multimedia CALL packages designed for those who use English in their profession or work and want exposure to authentic materials. They are intended for users at Intermediate level and above and focus in particular on developing listening skills and improving understanding of the English language. Each CD-ROM contains 20 to 30 minutes of authentic, unscripted video around which there are some 250 screens of interactive tasks with instant feedback to the user's actions.

Each CD-ROM has two main learning pathways – a *Listening Comprehension* option with a choice of six scenes from the video, each of which can be done at three different levels of difficulty (Level A, Intermediate; Level B, Upper Intermediate; and Level C, Advanced) and a *Language Work* option with a choice of three or four types of exercise: Grammar, Vocabulary, Functions and Pronunciation. All of these provide practice by using clips from the video and then building exercises from this basis.

### Ease of Use

The user interface is good, taking full advantage of the Windows environment. The video plays in one of two viewer sizes: 160x120 for MPC 1 set-ups (a 486 25mhz with a single

speed CD-ROM) and 240x180 for MPC 2 set-ups (486 50mhz, dual speed CD-ROM) and both worked well on my configuration.

There are three sets of controls: a Menu Bar of six items at the top of the screen which responds to a mouse click by revealing drop-down lists of choices corresponding to each item; Task Controls at the bottom left of the screen which only become active after the user has chosen a *Listening Comprehension* or *Language Work* option; and Video Controls which are activated in the same way. When the user interacts with a Task, they are given immediate feedback as to whether their answers are correct or not.

In addition there are buttons at the bottom of the page: Answer which provides information on what the correct answer is; 'Repeat' which takes the user back to the start of the activity; Workplan which summarises the activities attempted and the percentage of the activity completed, and Next which gives the user advice about related exercises which follow on from the one completed; this provides suggested pathways through the materials.

The video responds immediately to a button click of the controls (play, pause, stop, forward, rewind, return to start, volume), creating a smooth interactive feel. There are three buttons for viewing modes: subtitles on/off, video on/off and sound on/off and three viewing modes: the user can watch the whole video,

individual scenes from the video or particular clips from a scene and all can be controlled by clicking on the video control buttons.

### Screen Layout

On start-up, the user is faced with a grey background screen with text explaining what options are available. The left-hand side of the screen contains the instructions, the tasks and their controls, while the right-hand side has the stage in which the video plays and is controlled. In addition, there are small windows at the bottom of the screen which show which scene, clip, level and task is current. There is a drop-down menu at the top of the screen with the following options:

- *File*, with Open, Save, Print and Exit; Level, with A, B and C;
- *Listening Comprehension*, with the title of each scene, each divided into two or three clips available (in the 'Managing Quality' CD-ROM the scenes are: About Ricoh UK, 'I'm Responsible for ...', The Manufacturing Processes, Managing Quality, Managing Quality Production, and Working for a Multinational Company);
- *Language Work*, with Grammar, Vocabulary, Functions and Pronunciation;
- *Tasks* with two modes, view with and without; and *Help* with items explaining the options available in the package, advice on how to use them, and a glossary of obscure or technical words used on the video.

### Pedagogical content

The content is based around the videos which are 'unscripted' and authentic in a documentary sense. Clearly they are not 'fly-on-the-wall'; the participants are aware of the nature and purpose of the video and use clear, modulated speech. The production values have also filtered out natural, environmental distractions and interferences from the video: it is TV rather than the messiness of 'real' life. The intended user is the unsupervised (it is a self-study package), so tidying up reality is probably necessary and the interactions, although not spontaneous, are not rehearsed and so include the hesitations and other paralinguistic

features of speech.

The tasks relating to Listening Comprehension come in three stages: 'Before', 'While' and 'After' Listening, and in three levels of difficulty. As one would expect, the 'Before Listening' tasks are designed to sensitise the user and to provide a focus for the listening itself. There is a variety of exercises such as classifying different key words, e.g. 'Is it a Product, a Job or Division?' via a matching activity, and matching a word with its definition.

There is also variety in the 'While Listening' tasks ranging from identify/match the product/situation described on the video with a picture, to deciding whether a statement is true or false. When the answer is incorrect, users are left to make up their own mind about what to do. They can pause the video, rewind and play the section again to find a new answer or can click the Answer button to get the correct answer. In many cases this is unnecessary because the answers are mutually exclusive (True/False or Yes/No). One drawback with the system of providing immediate feedback to the user's answer is that because the questions pop up one at a time, if a user misses a piece of information and so does not answer at all, the video keeps playing and although the user may understand what is subsequently going on, the question on view remains that referring to an earlier part of the clip and the questions relating to the later parts of the clip which the user does follow are not on screen to be answered. In effect, the questions may get out of synch with the video clip, so muddling attempts to answer. A further option is to click the Repeat button which takes the user back to the start of the exercise, removing any changes made in the meantime.

The 'After Listening' tasks are similar but may ask the user to try and remember if a statement is true or false or to click on a word in a list which completes a phrase or sentence used on the video clip. In all of the tasks, the way the package indicates whether something is correct or not is clear and consistent and the colour coding is useful – a red X if wrong, a green tick if correct and blue to indicate which is the 'live' element or question. As there is an information box which indicates the total

number of questions in the task, the user knows how far into the exercise s/he is.

In the Language Work module there are four types of task on the 'Introduction to a British Company' CD-ROM and three on the 'Managing Quality' one. On both there are tasks on Grammar, Vocabulary and Functions, the extra one being Pronunciation. Typical Grammar items are on Articles, Can, Going to, Passive, Past Simple, Conjunctions, Prepositions of Place etc. Typical Function items are Describing your Company, Talking about Location, Sequence of Events, Opinions, Suggestions etc. and Vocabulary consists of items such as Producing, Management Positions, Numbers, Quality Control, Manufacturing etc.

To each of these items correspond two screens. The first screen aims to sensitise or inform the user about the item such as the giving of a grammatical explanation with examples followed by a tightly controlled activity on that point, or an activity such as matching a word with its definition. Another approach in these first screens is to elicit from the user their current knowledge/understanding of the item selected and then check it against a list built into the package. The second screen involves an interactive task while watching a video clip, such as typing in the word of the same class as the item under study which is used by one of the characters in the video clip.

One problem with both the Listening Comprehension and the Language Work modules using the same video texts is that users after a while come across clips they have already encountered doing another exercise. While the task may be very different the source is the same, making it perhaps less interesting the second time round and resulting in the subsequent viewing losing realism. Although the screen always provides information about which clip and which scene is 'live', so enabling a user to avoid repeating, to do all the learning tasks inevitably involves repetition of texts. Perhaps the material is over-exploited.

Playback is full-motion and as many scenes are of talking heads, it is possible to focus on

features such as lip movements, facial expressions etc., not just the words spoken, and when combined with the options of Video On/Off and Sound On/Off there are many ways in which the materials can be exploited for different purposes.

### **Documentation**

These CD-ROMs come with a minimum of documentation and instructions. The CD sleeve has a little booklet which gives a brief outline of what the disk contains and the range of tasks provided. It also gives hardware/software requirements to run the package and installation instructions. There is no instruction manual as such, nor a workbook with follow-up paper-based activities. As a self study package this makes sense: who would correct any work done in such a manner? To compensate, the Help gives clear information about the content and learning methodology of the package and provides this information in five languages – English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, so many users can be informed in their L1. Useful items in Help include 'Learning Strategies', 'How to Use', 'About English for Business' and 'Glossary'.

### **Overall Value\Comments**

*Strong point:* These CD-ROMs provide good, authentic Business English video materials with carefully thought out and planned tasks built around them. The interface is appealing with good layout, use of colour and immediate responses to user actions. Although designed for self-study, the material could equally be used with a class as part of an integrated course.

*Weak point:* The material is a bit over-exploited. Users will come across the same clips in different tasks, and while this does not invalidate the learning that takes place as the point being focused on is different, it may have a negative impact on the user's interest and concentration.

**Jim Ross**  
**London Guildhall University**

# Desktop English Tutor Version 1.32

Authors: W. Moore, P. Black, J. Horton & J. Valentine, Sanderson CBT Ltd.

Hardware requirements: Any IBM compatible 386 PC with MS-DOS 5.0 or later; a CD-ROM drive; 5 MB free space on a hard disk; 500K Base RAM available; 1500 RAM configured and available as DMS; Sound Blaster, Orchid Sound Wave 32 or Gallant soundcard (or hardware compatible equivalent); 16-colour VGA monitor; microphone; speakers or headphones.

Available from: Sanderson CBT Ltd., Sheffield Science Park, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 2LX.

Price: £160.00 for a single copy of the CD-ROM, tutor's floppy disk, the Instruction book and the Workbook. Discounts available for bulk purchases.

## Intended Use/Area of Application

*Desktop English* is a multimedia CALL package of 12 functional (Greetings and Goodbyes) and situational (Restaurants) 'Chapters' containing 85 units giving some 60 to 100 hours of learning material. These units are further sub-divisions of the function (Formal Greetings, Informal Greetings, Saying Goodbye) or situation, and disguise an underlying structural syllabus.

The materials of the units are graded into three levels of difficulty: Level 2, elementary; Level 3, lower intermediate; Level 4, higher intermediate, interchangeable at the click of a button. Although not all levels are available in all units, each unit has follow-on exercises designed to extend the vocabulary and understanding gained in the unit. In addition there is a Resource Bank of 200 authentic newspaper articles relating to many of the topics covered in the units. Exercises using this Resource Bank increase the learning time of the package, it is claimed, by at least 100 hours. An authoring facility in the package also allows tutors to add their own texts and create exercises with them.

## Screen layout

Being DOS-based, the screen layout is rather basic. On start-up, the user is faced with a blue background screen giving the logo, name of producer and instructions on how to proceed. The next screen gives the name of the program with four black and white pictures of people

but no instructions as to how to continue. In fact, pressing any key moves the learner on to a screen giving copyright information and other such detail. Only then does the user get to the first 'real' screen. This screen has a grey background with a series of graphic icons along the top and bottom.

## Ease of Use

Although generally clear and straightforward, the user interface suffers from being DOS based in this age of Windows and Mac interfaces. The graphics are cartoon-like and entirely static; there is no animation (apart from a slider bar when using the audio facilities) or video, which detracts from the realism sought, particularly in the situation-based units.

Interaction is through clicking on various graphic buttons: Navigation buttons along the bottom of the screen, such as arrows to go to the next/previous page and a screen blind to close the unit. There is also a Print button and Help buttons in the form of 'pass' (gives model answer) and 'hint'. In addition, there are Functional buttons arranged as a menu at the top of the screen: logo, new text, dictionary, CBT (the course map page) News Game, pen, bin, shut doors. Along the bottom are another series of graphic icons (print, pass, arrows (forward and back) and a screen blind with 'close') which disable themselves when unavailable. Unfortunately, the purpose of these icons is not immediately obvious and reference to the book or trial and error is necessary.

In addition, along the top of the screen, there are basic word-processing tools enabling the user to enter text, copy and paste, format text, and find a word, but the methods are rudimentary. For instance, copying and pasting is done by clicking on a camera icon and then pointing it at the document to copy and clicking. The camera then changes into the icon of a scroll of paper in a hand with a pointing finger which then has to be aimed at the pasting-in point. A mouse click then pastes the text into the new position. Although the process is clear, as are the instructions in the book, it is a long way from the games arcade expectations of many modern users; the immediacy and smoothness of Windows and other graphic user interfaces is missing. Notepads created in this way are automatically saved as icons to which names can be added. A printing facility is also available.

The graphic buttons for the audio component are straightforward: a headphone set indicates a listening exercise which plays on a mouse click, and a picture of two people talking with a microphone between them indicates that the exercise requires the learner to speak. This is also started by a mouse click and a red slider bar moves across to indicate time remaining for the recording. The recording can then be played back by clicking on the headphones button.

### **Pedagogical content**

Units begin with an introduction to the item of study, often in the form of a listening passage. The sound is clear and the dialogues are reasonably 'realistic' with the learner often required to do something while listening such as type in short answers to pre-set questions. Although this makes the process more interactive and helps focus attention, the mechanics of moving the mouse pointer to the right answer box, clicking and typing in the answer while continuing to listen and think about the next answer, is distracting. A further problem with this type of activity is that it is not possible to pause the audio file to enable the learner to 'catch up'. Instead it is necessary to wait and play the whole extract again from the beginning. This lack of flexibility is something

which detracts from a number of the interactions devised for the learner. Where the learner has merely to select from a given set of choices the task is more reasonable even though these can involve dragging and dropping which is rather cumbersome.

The units provide for presentation of the item to be learnt, explanation and examples and further practice. These are often little more than can be found in a traditional course-book; a mere transfer from paper to screen with the addition of controls to ensure the correct answers are arrived at. For a learner using the package on his/her own without a tutor, this can be a clear advantage but little is gained if the program is followed in a traditional class setting. The Workbook which accompanies the CD-ROM provides follow-on activities for the learner to practise items with pen and paper.

The program prevents the user from skipping an exercise, or part of an exercise; all the questions have to have a correct answer before the user can move on, even if it means calling up the model answer by clicking on the Pass button. While this ensures the learner follows the programme thoroughly, it can be too restrictive and frustrating.

There are three types of exercise built into the course units: 'Putting words in order' which involves dragging and dropping words/phrases into boxes to show their sequence; 'Fill the gaps' which again involves dragging and dropping words/phrases into boxed gaps in a text; and 'Multiple choice' which requires the user to click on the correct answer(s). Feedback for these exercises is given when the user clicks on the forward arrow. If there is an incorrect answer, the learner is requested to try again and so on until either all the responses are correct or, in frustration, the learner clicks on the Pass button which reveals a model answer.

There are other 'help' tools. Clicking on the dictionary graphic button opens the dictionary at the word the cursor is currently positioned on. It is also possible to scroll up and down through the dictionary entries and to type in a word for the program to go to. The information is given in the form of a grammat-

ical explanation, a definition and an example of the word in context, which in most instances seemed adequate, though the usefulness of the grammatical explanation depends on the ability of the user to make sense of it. Not all words in the program are covered in the dictionary, which could prove annoying.

There are also exercises using the Resource Bank texts which are usually related topically to the unit being studied. There are five types of exercise: Space Out, which is a text without any textual markers (spaces, capitals, punctuation etc.) Cloze, Dictation, Jumble (which operates at the level of lines rather than words) and Blank Out which is a text with most words removed. The learner types words into a box and hits return. If the word exists in the text then all its instances are shown. This continues until all the text is complete or the learner uses Hint which reveals the first letter of each blanked out word. Clicking Hint again reveals the second letter of each blanked out word and so on. In all of these the learner can choose Pass which provides the model answer.

These forms of exercise (except dictation) also exist as authoring shells enabling tutors to key in their own texts, add them to the Resource Bank and create with minimal effort exercises around them. These can be integrated into the learning programme as the tutor is able to select the function, the level and the type of exercise and then 'tag' it so making the article come up after a particular unit and level.

Another similar interesting feature of this package is the 'tutor' mode. This is accessed by keying in the appropriate password on starting up and provides some additional tools which help to monitor and control use of the package by learners, such as a logging facility enabling the tutor to see which units a learner has completed. In addition, the tutor can create specific pathways for a particular learner to follow using the 'Student Record System' in this mode. These features are useful in that the program can be adapted and added to in order to tailor it to the specific needs of a particular learner or even group of learners. This flexibility is a positive feature.

Beyond the set units and the additional materials authored in, the package comes with

an interesting game/simulation 'The Front Page'. The task (creating a front page on the basis of news coming down the wire) ensures that learners will have to interact with one another, have to make frequent decisions on not just which articles to include, but whether they require editing, photographs etc. Unfortunately it does not seem possible for tutors to author in their own articles, images etc. which would extend the life of the simulation beyond one session.

### Documentation

The documentation with the package is clear and comprehensive covering hardware requirements, installation procedures and operating instructions for both learners and tutors. Particularly useful are the Appendices which give a clear breakdown of the grammar and teaching points for each unit and a contents list of the Resource Bank in terms of their function, title, level, length and type of exercise. This helps the tutor in planning particular pathways for learners and in deciding what original materials to author in to complement the existing package. Technical support is provided on a Help Line which proved effective in overcoming a difficulty I encountered.

### Overall Value/Comments

*Strong point:* The greatest value of *Desktop English* is in how it can be extended and tailored to the particular requirements of a course, class or individual learner. The authoring facility and Student Record System make it very 'user-friendly' for the tutor in both setting up learning and monitoring a learner's progress. The News Office simulation looks to be an interesting and challenging task involving the use of authentic texts and real tasks, including deadlines, with no set outcome.

*Weak point:* The package's biggest drawback is its operating system. This has severely limited the scope of the graphics and the overall feel of the interface. The range and type of exercises available, while adequate, are unoriginal and would almost be as effective on paper.

**Jim Ross**  
**London Guildhall University**

# Japanese: Daily Conversation for Beginners

Author: Izumi Saita, Associate Professor of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University, Japan.

Hardware requirements: As a minimum; a 486-based computer with a processor speed of at least 50Mhz and a windows device driver supporting 256 colours are required. Despite the box labelling, the support software needed to run *Japanese Daily Conversation for Beginners* runs well on versions of windows later than 3.1; no problems were encountered during installation in the Japanese version of windows, or indeed either language releases of Windows95. The minimum amount of memory recommended for the package is 16MB, although we were able to work happily with only 8MB. Approximately 6MB of hard disk space is needed for use by the supporting software, and a double speed CD-ROM drive (or faster) is essential for the efficient retrieval of video clips. The audio section of the package requires a windows-compatible sound card with speakers. Additionally, a microphone to enable the student to make use of the recorded repeat feature is highly recommended.

Available from: IBM Japan Limited, 19-21 Nihonbashi hakozaki-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 101, Japan

Price: 9,500 Yen.

## Introduction

This single CD-ROM, produced jointly by NHK (Japan's national television company) and IBM represents a milestone in the production of true multimedia language tools for the IBM compatible PC. As well as the video and audio clips being clearly and professionally edited, the visually-oriented nature of the whole package completely eliminates the need for students to type anything; with the emphasis being placed wholly on listening, speaking and, of course..... mouse-clicking!

Installation of the support software is straightforward, and takes only a few minutes. On running the package, an introductory screen greets the student, after which the main Topics menu is displayed. It is from this menu that one navigates the whole package (see Figure 1). The mouse is used to effect movement around the different sections of the package, and although the lack of text cues can sometimes leave one wondering what to 'click' next, the colour-coded boxes – in conjunction with the excellent on-line help feature – provide plenty of clues. In addition to this, the main menu screen has a Guide option, which gives a brief overview of the package as a whole.

## Description of Software: Topics Menu

Ten distinct situational themes from which to choose, as well as set-up and Extras options, are presented in the Topics menu. The topics cover a wide variety of daily situations, ranging from the simplest of greetings, to making appointments at the clinic. Two or three 'skits' relating to each topic are provided, and between them different grammatical and practical aspects of the language are covered. On choosing a skit topic, a further screen shows key phrases from each of the themes covered, and the user is then expected to choose one skit from them.

On clicking the Extras icon in the main menu, the user is led to a menu of options centred mostly on key elementary grammatical topics and the formation of verbs, all of which give the student chance to practise pronunciation of the sample expressions being covered. A further option deals with practising pronunciation of the whole Japanese number range: a bingo game, which focuses on the ability to recognise Japanese numbers from one to a hundred, drills this knowledge.

The skits – around which almost everything in the package revolves – each consist of a dialogue text box in the lower half, and an

**Figure 1** Software topics menu

area for video in the upper section. Flanking the video area are buttons used to control the skits. Options exist to toggle the contents of the text dialogue box between romanised Japanese (the default), actual Japanese script – including Chinese characters (kanji), English, and a blank screen – for those students who can't trust themselves to look away when it's their turn to recite from memory!

### The Skit Screen

The simplest of all operations is Listen: clicking this button starts the video and its associated sound-track running. The dialogue text can be followed as each sentence is spoken by the actors. Repeat is a variant of the Listen option whereby the student listens to the dialogue one phrase at a time, and is then given a chance to repeat the sentence. The appropriate sentence within the dialogue box is highlighted as it is spoken by the video actor, and a time bar below the video frame indicates how quickly the student should be imitating the given sentence when it is his/her turn. It was noted that the allocated time for student imitation often demanded a near-natural speed response, and could prove difficult for some *ab initio* learners. Assuming that the Record-On option has been initialised in the Set-up section of the main menu, the student's response is recorded by microphone. On completion of the dialogue the whole skit is played back – substituting the original actor's voice with that of the student. This section is by far the most interactive and 'fun' part of the package, and immediate feedback such as this will certainly go a long way in helping to improve individual students' pronunciation and general fluency.

In Role-play, the student is asked to choose which actor in the skit s/he would like to take the part of. Responses are not recorded in this section – which is a shame – but the video continues to roll, and the appropriate sentence in the dialogue box is highlighted to prompt the student when it is his/her turn to speak.

The Listen, Repeat and Role-play options attached to each skit all give students the freedom to practise paced, natural speed pronunciation – which will no doubt develop oral and aural abilities when faced with similar, real-life situations. One particularly useful (and apparently undocumented) feature of these options was that any sentence within a skit dialogue could be individually repeated by pointing and clicking with the mouse.

Two very useful buttons on the skit screen – Words and Notes – allow students to check the meaning, pronunciation and usage of phrases and individual words within the skit dialogue. These options help by providing dynamic and relevant information on the current skit theme, including notes on related topics, cultural aspects, grammar, and the appropriateness of using a certain phrase in a given situation. In fact, these two options between them form an elementary-level multimedia dictionary, replete with plenty of visual and aural entries.

Pattern Drill and Listening Drill are quiz-type options on the skit screens. Pattern drill focuses on a set of eight sketched drawings which are presented in turn to the student, each sketch being accompanied by a dialogue box containing a sentence with a blanked-off word. At each stage, the student is asked to guess the missing word by looking at the sketch. Clicking the Answer button reveals the

correct answer, the preferred pronunciation of which is simultaneously heard. Should the student encounter any difficulties, there is the option of having the Japanese sentence in the dialogue box translated into English. One problem encountered here was down to the clarity of sketches: as they were hand-drawn, it was often quite difficult to make out what the object in question actually was! Perhaps previous exposure to Japanese culture was assumed during the production of this section, as the student is expected to recognise drawings of sushi and tempura – foods which the student would not necessarily be familiar with had s/he not previously visited Japan.

Listening Drill focuses on the student's ability to recognise a situation from a conversation related to the current skit theme. In this section, eight sets of two sketched pictures are presented in turn, along with a spoken dialogue, usually between two people. The student then has to choose by clicking on the picture which correctly corresponds to the situation. Of course, there is a 50 per cent chance of guessing correctly, but the main aim of this exercise is to develop aural skills in such a way as to make the learning process fun.

The on-line help facility is an impressive and consistent aspect of the whole package; obviously a feature which the developers wanted to emphasise. Help can be sought at any time by clicking the Help button, and directing the mouse pointer to the general area of confusion. A detailed description of the function of that particular area of the program

is then presented to the student, which – in my experience – helped out faultlessly on every occasion.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the package is essential for students following a course of self-directed study, and would be ideal for the prospective tourist or time-pressed executive with an impending visit to Japan. However, given the restricted set of themes and grammatical elements covered, the usefulness of this kind of package would soon expire in a dedicated academic environment. It would nonetheless prove to be an excellent supplement to any course where Japanese was being taught as a non-specialist subject.

It would be possible for two students to use this package together, and so classes could be organised around pair use of multimedia machines. As *Daily Conversation for Beginners* is very much a student-only oriented package, individual progress reports or score charts are not kept to provide feedback for the teacher. It would be nice to see an accompanying workbook for use between computer sessions, which could expand on the subject matter more thoroughly. Also, the option to print the material is not provided; it would be nice to have students take pages away, sit down and study them in their own time.

**Paul Sweeny**  
**School of East Asian Studies,**  
**University of Sheffield**

# The Phonemic Alphabet in English: An Interactive Mac Program

Author: Don Friend.

Hardware requirements: Apple Macintosh, Mac Plus, Classic, LC or above.

Available from: Don Friend, ELT Department, University of St Andrews, Butt's Wynd, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9AL.

Price: Basic licence £50.00 (up to 5 stations at a single site); extended licence £100.00 (unlimited usage at a single site).

This program, which uses Hypercard, is intended to help learners with the basics of phonemic transcription for English words, using a commonly accepted system of representing the contrasts found in Received Pronunciation (RP), the standard form of pronunciation used in England and one of the main target models used by learners of English. In view of this it would perhaps be more appropriate to call the program *A Phonemic Alphabet for English*. Given its specific aim, the program would be of use to a wide range of learners of English as part of an initial introduction to transcription or as a refresher course for those with previous exposure to phonetics. I can also see the program as a very useful supplementary aid for trainee teachers on a short course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL): the content would be most useful, as would be the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the potential of CAL by learning about a topic of direct relevance to their interests in EFL. In what follows I will describe the exercises provided and comment on some of their virtues or potential weaknesses as I see them.

The program is simple to operate and there is a README file which gives instructions about loading the special fonts used in the program. The main menu provides the following options:

1. Listen to vowel sounds

2. Listen to consonant sounds
3. Vowel sound test
4. Consonant sound test
5. Word sound test
6. Transcribing from phonetics
7. Connecting words with symbols.

In the first of these, 'Listen to vowel sounds', there is a submenu allowing a choice between short and long vowels, diphthongs and triphthongs. In each case, the screen has a number of boxes, each containing a large, clear phonemic symbol. By clicking on the symbol, you can hear the corresponding sound and at the same time see a word containing that sound. For example, by clicking on /ɪ/ you can hear the short front vowel pronounced on its own while seeing the word *pit* displayed. This use of sound is likely to be a popular feature of the program. Unfortunately some of the sounds do not have a particularly pleasant voice quality: this was quite noticeable in the case of /æ/, produced with a strong glottal stop and a creaky voice. In a program of this type it would be a great advantage to have a choice of voices, allowing users to select according to preference from at least one male and one female voice.

The material is presented with the minimum of comment, apart from an introductory screen which indicates the general usefulness of having a command of phonemic notation. This straightforward presentation of sounds

and symbols is probably a good idea, but there are areas where some indication of variation could be in order. For instance, many speakers of RP tend not to produce the /eə/ diphthong in words such as *fair*, *rare* etc., while many non-RP varieties do not make a distinction between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/, so that for such speakers *putt* and *put* are homophones. Some users of the program may speak varieties in which /r/ is pronounced in contexts where it is not pronounced in RP, so that *pa* and *par* are not homophones. The author suggests that the program may be of benefit to TEFL teachers and trainees, and also students of linguistics. It is my experience that learners of this type, particularly when they are native speakers of English, are likely to raise questions about perceived differences between their own speech and the accent for which the transcription has been designed. It may therefore be desirable to indicate within the program, however briefly, that such differences are acknowledged and expected. Crystal (1995 pp 236–47) provides a useful introduction to the sound system of English which considers RP in relation to other accents.

Rather than returning to the main menu, one has the option of moving directly to the Vowel Test exercise. In this exercise you click a button to hear a vowel sound and you then click on the appropriate symbol to indicate which sound was heard. The exercises on consonants work in the same way, except that there is an option to choose all consonant symbols, or simply to concentrate on ‘problem’ consonants, such as /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/ etc.

After exercises on individual sound segments there is an exercise called Word Recognition, in which you hear a word, and have to identify which of four transcriptions is the correct one; for example, while hearing *bad* pronounced you are required to select between /bɪd/, /bed/, /bæd/ or /bɑ:d/; while hearing *coat* you are required to select between /ku:t/, /kɒt/, /kɔ:t/ and /kəʊt/. This multiple choice exercise is the closest the program comes to requiring the learner to modify sounds into symbols.

The exercise ‘Transcribing words written phonetically into English script’ presents indi-

vidual words written in phonemic form and the learner is required to type the word in conventional orthography. To give an idea of the amount of test material contained in the program, this exercise contains sixty words. Some of the examples introduce syllabic consonants without any comment; for instance, *youthful* is transcribed as /'ju:θfl/, *curtain* as /'kɜ:tn/, but *motion* as /'məʊʃən/. It might be useful to have an indication of reference material where this and other matters affecting transcription are discussed in more detail, for instance Roach (1991) or Jones (1991). Note also that there is a small inconsistency in the transcription used in this exercise: /ɑ:/ has been used instead of the symbol /ɑ:/ introduced in the earlier exercises.

In ‘Connecting words and symbols’ about 20 words have to be sorted into four groups according to the vowels that they contain; for example, in one of the five screens in this exercise the groups are as follows:

/ɔ:/ /æ/ /eɪ/ /ɑ:/

The set of words to be sorted is:

*walk bought add ate bat caught port  
grade call dawn man came laugh rain  
heart car farm stab have are age*

This seems a very clear way of drawing the attention of learners to some of the complexities of spelling/sound correspondences in English.

As indicated in the program title, the material in *The Phonemic Alphabet in English* does not require spoken production of sounds by the learner. Nevertheless, the author has interesting ideas for collaborative work in which production is involved: one student hears a sound on earphones, and must then relay that sound to enable another student to identify it and respond as required in the program. The program is not designed to lead the learner from a wrong answer toward a correct one. In general, an indication is given that an answer is wrong and on the third attempt the correct answer is displayed. In this program there is

no scoring of correct/incorrect responses. Comparing this with other programs on phonetics that I have seen, I found this a potential advantage in terms of simplicity, but a disadvantage in not providing an extra incentive to concentrate the mind of the user. Ideally, I would have liked an option to keep a score of responses.

In general I found this a straightforward and enjoyable program to use and one that deals with a topic that certain students may welcome a chance to work at individually. It is suitable for students who require some initial exposure to phonemic transcription in English. Some of the brief introductory statements are expressed in a rather loose way, with no apparent consistency in the use of the terms *phonetic* or *phonemic*. Nevertheless, the main body of the program does contain very useful

material, thoughtfully presented. I am sure that students will appreciate the use of sound, which in this program is intrinsic to the topic that is being treated.

**Michael Lumsden**  
**University of Hull**

## References

- Crystal, D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.
- Jones, D. *An English Pronouncing Dictionary*, 14th Edition, edited by A C Gimson, Revisions and Supplement by S Ramsaran. Cambridge: CUP, 1991.
- Roach, P. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*, Second Edition Cambridge: CUP, 1991.

# Book Reviews

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## Multimedia and hypertext – the Internet and beyond

J Nielsen, AP Professional, London, 1995, ISBN 0  
12 518408 5

This book presents a veritable compendium of information on hypertext theories and practices. Nielsen, one of hypertext's major and long-term exponents, covers much ground and provides many examples of current successful implementations of hypertext (for hypertext, read also 'hypermedia and multimedia') applications. Unsurprisingly for such a wide-ranging publication, he also discusses the growing importance and influence of the Internet on future hypertext-based systems.

For those linguists interested in exploiting the high potential of hypertext in their research into CALL evaluation and development, this book should prove to be an excellent reference manual. In common with so many texts of this kind, it is meant to be dipped into rather than read in its entirety. Thus, for the absolute beginner there are the introductory chapters on defining hypertext, a discussion of a typical hypertext system (the author's own), a history of hypertext and examples of the various implementations of hypertext products and their architecture (chapters 1–5). For the would-be author, there are chapters on using, evaluating, emulating ('copying') and authoring hypertext applica-

tions (chapters 10–12). For experienced hypertext authors, Nielsen offers important guidelines on prototyping, on-line documentation (including dictionaries and references books), and the dissemination of research results. A caveat is issued in the area of educational applications (chapter 4). Although hypertext is quite useful in: "... open learning applications where the student is allowed freedom of action and encouraged to take the initiative... On the other hand, hypertext may be less well suited for the drill-and-practice type learning that is still necessary in some situations" (p.101). And yet, this is still typical of many past and current CALL applications.

Nielsen does have a section devoted to the learning of foreign languages (pp. 103–5) where he is very positive about applying hypertext-based systems to this task. In giving examples: of electronic dictionaries (again); of having an original and translated text on a split screen (cf. *Transit* methodology\*); of using a 'Video Linguist' (cf. *TV und Texte, Télé-Textes*, etc.); of rôle-playing scenarios (cf. the *Berlitz Business Language Series*); Nielsen continually reminds highly experienced authors that hypertext is not yet being used to its fullest potential in this area.

Chapter 6, 'Hardware Support for Hypertext', discusses the deficiencies of the current generation of computer hardware (see the

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\**TransIt*, devised by Doug and June Thompson, University of Hull, is the forerunner of *Transit-TIGER*, a range of translation teaching programs produced by the TELL Consortium.

'dynabook dream') and serves as a handy introduction to a display of the great opportunities offered to us by the Internet. From Nielsen's large database of information and statistics on the Net (chapters 7–9), we should perhaps conclude that the Net will bring us and our students closer to our target foreign country, to its people and so to its language and culture through the use of Bulletin Board Systems, newsgroups, Multi-User Dungeons, Internet Relay Chat, distance-learning, list-servers, websites and transferable shareware.

And so finally the real world may enter our research and our class and seminar rooms. Hypertext, as Nielsen readily admits, may not be the single answer to all our problems, but like the Internet, it can go a long way in helping us to solve many of them.

This is a comprehensive and very useful reference book with a large and annotated bibliography attached.

**Liam Murray**  
**University of Warwick**

## Computers and English Language Learning

John Higgins, 1995, ISBN 1 871516 40 4

When I first received this book I found its format somewhat unexpected: rather than a single text by a single author or a collection of papers by different authors it is a collection of papers by a single author, some dating back to the 1960s. Its musical equivalent, then, would be a *Greatest Hits: The Singles* anthology. Having said that, I think it is a perfectly legitimate idea: academics publish in many different journals, some of which are difficult to obtain, and we all have our favourite authors. So why not package these disparate papers together so that the author's best papers can be assembled in a single volume?

John Higgins is certainly one of my favourite writers on CALL: many of the papers are written in a personal, informal and anecdotal style which conveys his enthusiasm for CALL and which acts as an antidote to the dry and unengaged articles which currently abound. He is one of the few academic writers in our field who allow an identifiable personality to emerge through their papers.

One of the main problems facing publishers of books on CALL at present must be the strong likelihood that any book on currently available CALL software or on the state of the art will be completely out of date by the time

it is printed. For example, it would have been difficult to predict in 1993 that, in 1996 in the UK, every time you open a newspaper you find an advertisement for a cheap multimedia CD-ROM computer with free CD-ROMs bundled in, or an advertisement for cheap Internet access. It will take a couple of years to work out the full implications of these developments for CALL, by which time there will be new developments, etc. An important question to be asked of any text on CALL, then, is whether it is out of date or not.

On the one hand this book could be considered out of date in that it is in no way a guide to using current CALL software, setting up a CALL centre or writing programs using the latest authoring products. On the other hand it is not out of date in that it makes no such claims. According to the 'blurb' on the back sleeve, the importance of the papers is "both in their quality and that they reflect some 20 years of research, thus making an indispensable historical document." Although there is some truth in this, I think that the importance of the best papers resides in the fact that they tackle universal and unchanging aspects of CALL, namely the relationship which is always bound to exist between humans, computers and the learning process whatever the particular type of software or hardware. From this point of view, it is unlikely that the best papers will ever be completely out of date. However, I need convincing that there is a huge market out there for 'historical documents' on CALL. Although it was very interesting to look back at the historical develop-

ment of CALL as reflected in these papers, I don't think I would buy the book for that reason.

Who, then, would be interested in buying this book? I think it would be very suitable for Masters courses which have CALL components: the best papers give insight into the processes involved in developing software on the basis of consideration of the learning process, and John Higgins has written some of the most popular pieces of CALL software ever, including *Storyboard*. Nowhere in this collection do we get the 'wow the computer can do this – let's write a program' approach: there is always an intelligent discussion of the relationship between learning and the computer's potential. Underlying all of the papers on CALL is Higgin's "consistent approach to language and learning which has very little to do with machines, but a great deal to do with the notion that language learning must involve play. The value of CALL is, for me, that it allows a richer form of language exploration and play than has ever been possible before." (Introduction:v). There are useful examples of how to design programs like *Pinpoint* and *Verbalist*, and a coupon is included in the book which enables the reader to send for a free copy of the *Verbalist* software, including the source code. The collection of papers should be interesting to anyone who writes CALL software and also to old CALL hands in search of a good read. It would not be suitable for teachers who are just starting out with CALL or who want an introduction to or an overview of CALL.

'Power to the pupils' is a stimulating methodological paper which depicts the computer as the slave of the learner and the learning process. 'Integrating with class work' is an entertaining fable on the different approaches

to implementing CALL in the curriculum. 'Counting homophones and minimal pairs' is interesting for an account of the process of creating a program to identify English RP homophones and minimal pairs, as well as for the lengthy list of homophones and minimal pairs, which could be of practical use in some teaching situations. However, an article like 'Should teachers learn to program?' is looking a little dated to me, given the rise of authoring software.

Whilst the first twelve papers are concerned with CALL, the final ten papers are on general issues of language teaching and language. Although there were no papers in the second half which I disliked or disagreed with, I found them generally uninspired, unoriginal and pedestrian when compared with those of the first half. It seems to me that the spark in Higgin's writing comes from his enthusiasm for computers: take the computers away and the spark disappears too.

Finally, I began this review by saying that it was a good idea to assemble an author's entire output of papers in a single volume. Some readers may have read the debate on electronic publishing in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* in May 1995. One prominent academic suggested that all academics should simply put their entire personal output on the Internet (presumably on a web site) and thereby make their output available for free to all other academics in the world (or at least to those with Internet access). Having read John Higgins' collection of papers I am now convinced that this is an excellent idea, although I suppose that publishers are unlikely to agree.

**Paul Seedhouse**  
**University of York**

Minutes of the  
**EUROCALL Annual General Meeting**  
 held on  
 Friday 8 September 1995  
 at the EUROCALL 95 conference in Valencia, Spain

The meeting was attended by 65 members of EUROCALL and invited guests from affiliated organisations.

**1. President's Annual Report**

Professor Graham Davies, President of EUROCALL, presented his report, which is printed in full below.

**2. Minutes of the EUROCALL Annual General Meeting held on 16 September 1994 at the EUROCALL 94 conference in Karlsruhe, Germany**

It was proposed by Mr Paul Hickman and seconded by Prof. Dr. Bernd Rüschoff that the Minutes of the above meeting were a true record. This was approved by the meeting, with two abstentions.

**3. Treasurer's Report**

a) Prof. Dr. Dieter Wolff presented the accounts from the Wuppertal office, showing a surplus of DM 5,120. Because of the difficulties already referred to in the President's report, it had not been possible to provide audited accounts from both offices. Professor Graham Chesters proposed that amalgamated audited accounts would be distributed with the

November issue of *ReCALL*. This proposal was seconded by Dr. Bruce Ingraham and accepted unanimously.

b) The Budget for 1 August 1995 to 31 July 1996 was presented by Prof. Dr. Wolff. Acceptance of the budget was proposed by Mr Douglas Jamieson, seconded by Dr John Gillespie and approved unanimously. Mr Paul Hickman put forward the suggestion that, as a registered charity, EUROCALL might attract preferential rates of interest, and it was agreed that this would be investigated.

**4. Affiliation**

Professor Davies reminded the meeting of the affiliated organisations mentioned in his report. Mr Philippe Delcloque suggested more integration with ICALL groups, and it was pointed out that EUROCALL already co-operated with the biennial Exeter conference to ensure that colleagues from outside Europe were able to attend both conferences.

**5. Special Interest Groups**

Professor Davies asked for volunteers interested in co-ordinating Special Interest Groups to contact June Thompson with their proposals.

## **6. EUROCALL Conferences**

Conferences were scheduled for Szombathely and Dublin in 1996 and 1997 respectively. Proposals for 1988 and 1999 should be addressed to the President of EUROCALL in the first instance, and followed up with a formal letter from the Principal or Vice-Chancellor of the institution in question.

## **7. EUROCALL Workshops**

There was a short discussion on the desirability of local or regional EUROCALL workshops, details of which had been published by the EUROCALL secretariat. Volunteers to host such workshops were asked to contact June Thompson.

## **8. Other Business**

a) It was reported that Prof. Dr. Bernd Rüschoff had offered to draft a policy document on behalf of EUROCALL, in order to clarify and enhance the organisation's public image. The Executive Committee intended to explore ways in which electronic communication systems might be exploited in the preparation of this document.

b) Useful suggestions were offered, such as the inclusion of pre-conference workshops at future conferences, and a more active role for EUROCALL in teacher-training generally. The Executive Committee undertook to follow up these issues.

**June Thompson**  
**March 1996**

# President's Report

## EUROCALL Annual General Meeting

September 1995

### 1. Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to present this second President's Report on the activities of EUROCALL over the past year. EUROCALL has now been in existence as a formal professional association for two years. Thanks to funding provided by the EC LINGUA Bureau, it was possible to set up EUROCALL as a formal body in autumn 1993. Since then the association has been funded entirely from membership subscriptions.

### 2. Approval of the Constitution

The EUROCALL Constitution and Standing Orders were approved *nem con* at the 1994 Annual General meeting, including minor amendments to the Constitution required by the UK Charity Commissioners.

### 3. Elections 1994

In its first year of its existence as a formal association, namely from September 1993 to September 1994, EUROCALL operated without a formally elected President, Vice-President and Executive Committee. At the foundation meeting of EUROCALL on 14 September 1993, the appointment of the President, Graham Davies, and the Executive Committee, including the Vice-President, Lis

Kornum, was approved by the representatives at the foundation meeting in order to enable the association to function. It was agreed that elections would be held at the 1994 AGM for the President and the Executive Committee, subject to the acceptance of the Constitution by the AGM. The elected body would then function for a period of three years, and further elections would be held in 1997, as laid down in the Constitution.

At the 1994 AGM it was announced that nominations had been invited for the post of President, Vice-President and a number of ordinary members of the Executive Committee. Only one candidate had been nominated for the post of President: Graham Davies. No candidate had been nominated for the post of Vice-President, and the only other nominations received were for members of the Executive Committee who were already in post.

Graham Davies (President), Lis Kornum (Vice-President) and the current ordinary members of the temporary Executive Committee had indicated their willingness to stand for election. Two votes were therefore taken at the AGM:

1. For the post of President and Vice-President:  
Graham Davies, Thames Valley University,  
UK

Lis Kornum, Christianshavns Gymnasium,  
Denmark

2. For the following ordinary members of the Executive Committee:

June Thompson, University of Hull, UK

Dieter Wolff, University of Wuppertal,  
Germany

Graham Chesters, University of Hull, UK

János Kohn, Daniel Berzsenyi College,  
Hungary

Sylvia Lobbe, Rotterdam Polytechnic,  
Netherlands

Joseph Rézeau, University of Rennes,  
France

All the above were elected by a show of hands *nem con*.

The first meeting of the newly elected Executive Committee took place during the course of EUROCALL 1994. June Thompson was elected Secretary and Dieter Wolff was elected Treasurer. The following were co-opted as members of the Executive Committee:

Marja Kalaja, Helsinki University of  
Technology, Finland

Bernd Rüschoff, Pädagogische Hochschule  
Karlsruhe, Germany

Ana Gimeno, Universidad Politécnica de  
Valencia, Spain

#### 4. Meetings of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met a further three times in 1994–95:

November 1994, Christianshavns Gymnasium,  
Copenhagen, Denmark

April 1995, Dániel Berzsenyi College,  
Hungary

September 1995, Universidad Politécnica de  
Valencia, Spain

The following issues were discussed and a number of important decisions were made.

##### 4.1. Headquarters of EUROCALL

The University of Hull continued to act as

EUROCALL's administrative headquarters and as the publications base and provider of an information service. June Thompson continued to act as EUROCALL Secretary.

The University of Wuppertal was the financial headquarters of EUROCALL and responsible for the maintenance of the membership database during the period September 1994 to September 1995, with Dieter Wolff acting as EUROCALL Treasurer, assisted by Frank Peuster, part-time Administrative Assistant. As from October 1995 this situation will change: see 4.2.

##### 4.2. Accounts

EUROCALL's two bank accounts, one in Germany and one in the UK, continued to function during the period September 1994 to September 1995. Payment of membership fees was accepted by cheque in DM and in Sterling and by credit card in any currency.

A detailed report on EUROCALL's accounts was prepared for presentation to the AGM 1995 by the Treasurer, Dieter Wolff, and is appended to this report.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee held in September 1995 it was decided that the maintenance of two bank accounts was both inefficient and expensive. The division of responsibilities between the University of Hull and the University of Wuppertal was partly due to the encouragement of transnational collaboration under the terms of the LINGUA funding, but this was not working as well as expected.

It was therefore decided that the University of Hull would take over all the responsibilities for the administration of EUROCALL, that the Wuppertal bank account would be closed and the remaining funds transferred to the Hull account as soon as possible after September 1995. Dieter Wolff offered his resignation as Treasurer but agreed to continue to serve as an ordinary member of the Executive Committee. Dieter Wolff's resignation was accept-

ed and thanks were offered for the excellent job he had done helping to establish EUROCALL as a professional association. Graham Chesters was elected as the new Treasurer by the Executive Committee.

#### 4.3. *Publications*

The *ReCALL Newsletter* and the *ReCALL Journal*, now a fully-refereed academic publication, continued to be published by CTICML in association with EUROCALL. The first issue of the "new-look" *ReCALL Journal* appeared in May 1995.

The *ReCALL Newsletter* became available in electronic format on the World Wide Web: see 4.5.

The Proceedings of the 1994 EUROCALL Conference were being edited by Bernd Rüschoff and Dieter Wolff. János Kohn had agreed to arrange for the Proceedings to be printed in Szombathely, Hungary, the venue for EUROCALL 96.

#### 4.4. *Regional EUROCALL Workshops and Annual Conferences*

##### 4.4.1. *Regional EUROCALL Workshops*

A database of over 80 EUROCALL members has been set up, all specialists in different fields of CALL and TELL. The aim of setting up this database is to provide expertise in the running of regional EUROCALL workshops. Any institution that wishes to host a regional EUROCALL workshop can call upon this expertise. It is expected that the EUROCALL member will provide his/her expertise free of charge, subject to the payment of travel and subsistence expenses by the local host.

The first regional EUROCALL workshop was held at the Catholic University of Belgium, 17 May 1995. The theme was: The use of CD-ROMs and Electronic Dictionaries for English and French Language Teaching. The local organisers and contributors were Michael Goethals, Luc Pauwels, Yvan Rooseleer and Guido Custers. Graham Davies was invited as

a guest speaker to give an overview of the current trends of CALL and TELL in Europe and to demonstrate a selection of CD-ROMs for English language teaching. The workshop was attended by around 50 Belgian teachers and lecturers. It was agreed by all that this first regional workshop was a great success. Thanks to the provision of Pentiums with quad-speed CD-ROM drives and 16-bit soundcards by the local DELL agent, there were virtually no technical problems! A second regional workshop will take place in Mons, December 1995.

##### 4.4.2. *Annual Conferences*

EUROCALL 96 will take place at Dániel Berzsényi College, Szombathely, Hungary, 29-31 August 1996. János Kohn is the organiser.

At EUROCALL 94 I appealed for a volunteer to organise EUROCALL 97. Françoise Blin of Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland, undertook to investigate the possibility of her institution hosting EUROCALL 97. DCU has now been confirmed as the venue for EUROCALL 97, 11-13 September. Françoise Blin is the organiser

The venue for EUROCALL 98 is likely to be the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, but at the time of writing this report the Executive Committee is still awaiting confirmation.

There has been no firm offer to host EUROCALL 99, but the University of Compiègne, France, has expressed a strong interest.

#### 4.5. *Electronic communications*

A working party was set up to explore the possibilities of extending EUROCALL's commitment to electronic communications. Professor Charles Jennings, CECOMM, Southampton Institute, was coopted to head the working party and has been investigating the possibilities of seeking European funding to further EUROCALL's aims. Lis Kornum, Vice-President of EUROCALL, has been working in liaison with Charles Jennings.

EUROCALL now has its own Web site:

<http://www.cti.hull.ac.uk/eurocall.htm>

The *ReCALL Newsletter* can be accessed at this site.

The question of setting up a closed electronic mailbase list for EUROCALL members has been raised several times. I am pleased to announce that positive steps have been taken to set up such a list and members will be provided with further details in 1996.

#### 4.6. *Affiliation with other organisations*

Several members of the EUROCALL Executive Committee – Graham Davies, Graham Chesters, June Thompson and Ana Gimeno – attended CALICO 95 at Middlebury College, Vermont, in May 1995. They were invited to lunch by Frank Borchardt, Executive Director of CALICO, to meet members of the CALICO Executive Board and to discuss possibilities of future collaboration. Both the EUROCALL representatives and several members of the CALICO Executive Board indicated their interest in forging European links. The importance of avoiding clashes of conference dates and venues was a key issue that was discussed, and the possibility of each association inviting the other to send a delegation to annual conferences was also raised. The representatives of each association were reminded that CALICO and EUROCALL already offer mutual concessions to one another's members in respect of discounted conference fees. David Herren, who is responsible for technical support at CALICO conferences, announced that he would be attending EUROCALL 95 in Valencia.

Graham Davies has been invited to represent EUROCALL at the FLEAT III (Foreign Language Education and Technology) conference, which will be held at the University of Victoria, BC, Canada, 12-16 August 1997. Peter Liddell is the conference organiser.

EUROCALL has been in regular contact with Nina Garrett, Vice-President of IALL (Inter-

national Association for Learning Labs), who wishes to establish closer links between EUROCALL and IALL.

Graham Davies and Graham Chesters have been invited to represent EUROCALL on the WORLDCALL 98 Steering Committee. The University of Melbourne will host WORLDCALL 98, 13-17 July 1998, under the auspices of ATELL, the Australian Association for Technology Enhanced Language Learning. The WORLDCALL organiser is June Gassin (also a EUROCALL member). CALICO and CCALL are also represented on the Steering Committee.

Contact with the following organisations was maintained, all of which sent delegates to EUROCALL 95:

CCALL, Canada  
East European CALL Centre, Hungary  
CALL Austria  
Association for Learning Technology, UK  
IATEFL Computer SIG, UK

### 5. Recruitment

EUROCALL has already grown swiftly from a loosely-organised but nevertheless close informal association to what I believe will be a powerful voice in the New Europe, where the learning of languages will gain increasingly in importance. EUROCALL has never been an exclusive European Union club, and it is not intended that this position will change. EUROCALL is open to any individual or organisation sympathetic to its aims. Above all we need new members. Please publicise EUROCALL at seminars, workshops and conferences, among your colleagues at work - in short, wherever you can. Publicity leaflets can be made available to you if you can make use of them, and attractive posters have been printed.

### 6. Sponsorship

Seeking sponsors who are prepared to support EUROCALL in any way is crucial to our future development. Sponsors, however, are

only willing to support an organisation once its membership has reached a certain critical mass and when they can see that there may be long-term benefits in offering their support. When seeking sponsors it is important that one targets the right person in the right organisation.

A senior manager at IBM's International Education Centre, La Hulpe, Belgium, was known to some members of the Executive Committee as being sympathetic to the idea of CALL. He had already organised two CALL conferences at La Hulpe, and it was decided to make an approach to him regarding the possibility of IBM sponsoring EUROCALL. When we contacted IBM at La Hulpe, the manager in question had left the company, but a meeting was arranged with his successor, Bernard Donnay. In January 1995, Graham Davies, Graham Chesters and Peter Adman, met Bernard Donnay and Chris Liguori at La Hulpe, with a view to persuading IBM that EUROCALL was the leading organisation representing professional interests in CALL in Europe and was worth supporting financially or in other ways. The meeting was cordial and, although it quickly became clear that IBM was no longer likely to offer funding to organisations such as EUROCALL, it was suggested that a collaborative venture between EUROCALL and IBM might be possible, whereby EUROCALL would contribute to the development of IBM's new Personal Learning System (PLS), a new LAN-based CBT delivery system incorporating full-screen full-motion video. The EUROCALL team visiting La Hulpe were shown the system in action. PLS looked impressive but the CALL material available on the system was poor. It was suggested that EUROCALL might be able to help IBM by providing CALL materials and expertise in evaluating and piloting the system, subject to some kind of commitment from IBM to support EUROCALL. It was suggested that IBM should exhibit PLS at EUROCALL 95, possibly offering some kind of support for the conference. All these suggestions, however, bore no fruit. In spite of several faxes and emails reminding IBM of

our discussions, contact was broken off in April 1995. In the course of our discussions it became clear that IBM would be unlikely to host any more CALL conferences at La Hulpe. We can only conclude that IBM's commitment to CALL is luke-warm at best.

Our experience with IBM makes it clear that seeking sponsorship is a time-consuming gamble. EUROCALL desperately needs sponsorship as membership fees alone are insufficient to enable EUROCALL to embark upon more exciting ventures. I therefore urge all members to pass on to the Executive Committee the names of local firms that might be willing to sponsor EUROCALL. When seeking sponsorship it is important - especially when contacting a large company - that we have the name of an individual contact in the company, preferably someone who is known personally to a EUROCALL member. In the case of our experience with IBM we were unfortunate in that the known individual had moved on to another job, but knowing his name helped open the door.

## 7. Thanks

Many thanks are due once again this year. It is difficult to single out every EUROCALL member who has made a valuable contribution to the success of our association, but special thanks are due to:

The Executive Committee for being diligent and supportive throughout the year, especially June Thompson and Dieter Wolff for handling the increasing burden of administration.

Dr Justo Nieto Nieto, Rector of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, for hosting EUROCALL 95.

Ana Gimeno and all her support team for all the long hours of work they put in to enable EUROCALL 95 to take place.

**Graham Davies**  
**President, EUROCALL**  
**September 1995**



# Diary

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## 22-24 June, Hong Kong

*International Conference on Language Rights*

**Information:** Phil Benson, Department of English, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Fax +852 2333 6569

Email egphil@polyu.edu.hk

## 1-3 July, Liverpool, UK

*MediaActive '96*

**Information:** Barbara Stewart, Learning Methods Unit, Liverpool John Moores University, 98 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5UZ, UK

Tel +44 (0)151 707 2399, Fax +44 (0)151 231 3661

Email b.stewart@livjm.ac.uk

## 2 July, Norwich, UK

*TELL Consortium Workshop: Medialogue: exploiting the use of databases as a resource in language teaching*

**Information:** CTI Centre for Modern Languages, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull HU6 7RX, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1482 466373, Fax +44 (0)1482473816

Email CTI.Lang@hull.ac.uk

## 29-31 August, Szombathely, Hungary

*EUROCALL 96*

**Information:** CTI Centre for Modern Languages (details above).

## 5-7 September, Budapest, Hungary

*'Transferre necesse est' conference on Current Trends in Studies of Translation and Interpreting*

**Information:** Kinga Klaudy/Andrea Papp, Academy of Science, Office for International Co-operation, H-1051 Budapest, N dor u 7, Hungary

Tel/Fax +36 1 1172840

## 13-15 September, Keele, UK

*CALL 96: the Internet, a rich resource for language learning*

**Information:** CILT, 20 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4LB, UK

Tel +44 (0)171 379 5101, Fax +44 (0)171 379 5082

Email cilt@cilt.demon.co.uk

## 16-18 September, Glasgow, UK

*ALT-C 96, Conference of the Association for Learning Technology*

**Information:** Mrs Shona Cameron, ALT-C 96, Computer Centre, University of Strathclyde, 100 Cathedral Street, Glasgow G4 0LN, UK

Tel +44 (0)141 5524400 ext 3460,

Fax +44 (0)141 5534100

Email altc96@strath.ac.uk

## 25 September, London, UK

*CALL Workshop, Middlesex University*

**Information:** CTI Centre for Modern Languages (details above).

## 23-25 October, Barcelona, Spain

*European Writing Conferences of EARLI Special Interest Writing & Writing and Computers Association*

**Information:** EARLI SIG Writing, Liliana Tolchinsky

Tel +34 3 428 2142 ext 3384, Fax +34 3 402 1015

Email Sigwriti@trivium.gh.ub.es

## 7-9 November, London, UK

*London Language Show*

**Information:** B Campbell/A Thomas, Brintex, 32 Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London SW1V 2SS, UK

Tel +44 (0)171 973 6401, Fax +44 (0)171 233 5054

Email Brintex@Hemmjing.demon.co.uk

## 13-14 November, Newcastle, UK

*An introduction to the Internet for linguists*

**Information:** CTI Centre for Modern Languages (details above).

## 5-7 December, Budapest, Hungary

*Annual European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference*

**Information:** EAIE Secretariat, Van Diemenstraat 344, 1013 CR Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tel +31 20 625 27 27, Fax +31 20 620 94 06

Email eaie@sara.nl

## 28-30 January 1997, Karlsruhe, Germany

*LEARNTEC 97*

**Information:** Edith Herzog, Tel +49 721 3720-137 or Manfred Kiminus, Tel +49 721 3720-190

## 11-13 September 1997, Dublin, Ireland

*EUROCALL 97*

**Information:** CTI Centre for Modern Languages (details above).

## 13-17 July 1998, Melbourne, Australia

*WORLDCALL Conference*

**Information:** June Gassin, Horwood Language Centre, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia

Email June\_Gassin@muwayf.unimelb.edu.au



# ReCALL Software Guide

No. 4, September 1995

edited by June Thompson and Jenny Parsons

ISSN 0958-3459

The Guide gives details of more than 500 items of software which are suitable for use in language learning. Items are described briefly, with information about hardware requirements, suppliers and price, and are indexed under various categories and under various languages.

**Price per copy:** £15.00 sterling

**Reduced price for EUROCALL members:** £12.00 sterling

To: CTI Modern Languages, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX

Please supply \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the *ReCALL* Software Guide  
(Delete as applicable)

- I enclose a sterling cheque\* for £\_\_\_\_\_ payable to the University of Hull
- I enclose evidence of a bank transfer to Midland Bank plc, King William House, Market Place, Hull HU1 1JP, UK  
Sort code 40-25-18 Account no. 30 82 95 79 (University of Hull: CTI Centre for Modern Languages, DMKD000288)
- Please debit my VISA / MASTERCARD Account number

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Card expiry date: \_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

EUROCALL membership number (for reduced price): \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please note: We regret we are unable to accept cheques other than those in sterling. Requests for invoices must be accompanied by an official order. Invoices will NOT be issued for publications purchased at the reduced rate.

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Forthcoming workshops organised by the  
CTI Centre for Modern Languages,  
University of Hull**

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**Tuesday, 2 July, University of East Anglia:**

TELL Consortium Workshop: 'Medialogue: exploiting the use of databases as a resource in language teaching'

**Wednesday, 25 September, Middlesex University:**

CALL Workshop: including software demonstrations and 'hands on' practice

**Wednesday-Thursday, 13-14 November,  
University of Newcastle:**

In association with the NETSKILLS team: 'An Introduction to the Internet for Linguists'

Further details and registration forms available from

Jo Porritt

CTICML, The Language Institute,  
The University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX  
Tel 01482 465872, Fax 04182 473816  
Email J.V.Porritt@langc.hull.ac.uk

**Information also available from the CTICML and TELL  
Consortium World Wide Web Home Pages:**

<http://www.cti.hull.ac.uk> or <http://www.cti.hull.ac.uk/tell.htm>

The logo for the CTI Centre for Modern Languages, featuring the lowercase letters 'cti' in a bold, cursive, black font.