European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning

The EUROCALL Review

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ReCALL Journal

The forthcoming issue of *ReCALL* (Vol. 18, Part 2) will be distributed to EUROCALL members in November/December 2005. Please send articles, software reviews, details of relevant events or other items of interest for future issues to June Thompson, E d i t o r *ReCALL* d.j.thompson@hull.ac.uk

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Projects

The idea behind *Genders*

**A simple tutorial package designed to help learners of French
to internalise knowledge of noun gender distinctions.**

Noun gender is one of the most, if not the most, exasperating features of French for a learner. Apart from a relatively small number of words whose gender is set semantically (*père, mère, fils* etc.) there seems to be no reason why a table, freedom or France itself should be feminine, while a wall, a beginning or Japan should be masculine.

Yet it is an area of grammar that French children have no difficulty with at all. This is all the more surprising when one remembers that there is a great deal of French grammar, whole tenses for instance, that is specific to the written code and that has to be learnt by children when they go to school. In spite of this, though it is true that, like all children acquiring their native tongue, French children produce plenty of non-standard forms, (*de la lerbe* for *de l'herbe,* or *ça malairait bon* as past tense of *ça m'a l'air bon*) even quite small French children make surprisingly few errors of noun gender.

Traditional grammar, with its emphasis on the written language, was hardly equipped to explain this remarkable achievement on the part of small French children. And in fact traditional grammar books, where they discuss gender at all, point exclusively to features of the written language, the spelling of word endings for example. Since there is no stage in a child's acquisition of French, at which she or he "knows" certain nouns before being able to assign their gender correctly, it is obvious that any regularities observed in the written code are irrelevant so far as this particular skill is concerned.

Two pieces of scientific research into native French speakers' skill with noun gender were able to show that it is based on, or at least related to, a system of regularities in the pronunciation of the endings of words. The most considerable of these, carried out in Canada, (Tucker, G.R. *et al,* 1977) describes sorting the thirty one thousand nouns in the *Petit Larousse* dictionary according to their phonetic endings. This analysis revealed some very strong and consistent patterns. For example, more than 99% of the 1,963 nouns listed that end with a nasal /a/ sound (*gant, sang, banc* etc.) are masculine. Clearly, powerful regularities exist in the way in which noun gender in French is assigned. That even children are intuitively aware of these regularities was shown by testing school pupils with very rare, or even non-existent, "nonsense", words to which they usually assigned the gender in accordance with the rule being tested.

The Canadian project, by demonstrating that the gender of a majority -84.5%- of the French words tested is assigned according to a consistent pattern, clearly showed that noun gender in French is rule governed. However, the very thoroughness of this research, into a large sample of the language as a whole, inspires some doubt as to how far it explains the processes by which native speakers acquire this skill, and above all how it may be imparted to foreign learners. For example, the regularities noted can be expressed as a set of rules, but there are at least 40 of these rules, far too great a number to be taught usefully to students. That French children have internalised the rules, and apply them intuitively, does not mean that they are in any way conscious of them. French children are, to the contrary, no more aware of these rules than English children are, for example, conscious of the rules governing adjective order. As for example can be shown by an ability to rearrange:* *whitewashed little third cottage.* What is more, some of these rules have more than 30% of exceptions, most of which are very common words. Also, many of the words in the lists from which the rules or regularities were derived are extremely rare or unusual. For example, the 5175 words counted that end in an /R/ sound (76.8% masculine) include *sisymbre, opprobre, faucre* and *hypocondre,* to cite just a few. It is obvious that, while this research demonstrates a feature of great interest regarding the language as a whole, the sample of the language by which French children learn to assign gender correctly must be of a different order, and very much smaller. It is natural to assume that this sample will consist of the most common and the most frequently occurring words.

Looking for an explanation of French speakers' skill with noun gender by analysing the commonest and most frequent words is the idea behind an earlier piece of research, which was carried out in Russia (Mel'cuk, I.A., 1958). Here the nouns examined are those that figure in the French Word Book of G.E. Vander Beke, published in 1935, which is a frequency dictionary. Dr Mel'cuk 's analysis reveals regularities covering 85% of frequent words. The regularities are, however, much less clearly defined than those in the Canadian research.

To come now to our own work in Aberdeen. It started when, in the early eighties, thanks to the York Child Language Survey, we came by 80,000 words of transcriptions of French children of 8 to 10 years old talking among themselves. Though this was long before the days of OCR, we were able to have it rendered machine-readable and accessible to a concordancer. One of our brightest students of the time took on the job -it was her Honours dissertation- of analysing the 540 nouns appearing in this, small but significant, corpus, to see how far they bear out the regularities observed by Tucker *et al.*

We expected to find that, if we took this very small corpus, consisting exclusively of words used by small children and therefore of the commonest everyday language, the regularities observed by Tucker *et al* would be more strongly marked. Instead of this, we found roughly the same regularities as the Canadian project found in the 31,000 nouns of the *Petit Larousse.* On the other hand there were some interesting differences. For example, in several cases - words ending /g/ or /t/ - we found the majority of nouns to be of a different gender to that in Tucker's lists.

In both cases, but more clearly in our small and limited study, there was a definite tendency for the exceptions to the regularities noted by Tucker to occur among the most frequently occurring words. This is of course a well-known phenomenon in applied linguistics. The exceptions to rules tend to occur in cases that are either very common or very rare. E.g. English plurals: *child/children* and *hippopotamus/hippopotami.*

Interest in noun gender at the time led to the devising of a simple tutorial CALL program to teach learners of French the correct gender of common nouns. It functioned very simply. The learner was presented with a series of nouns, in batches of twenty at a time, and invited to click on M or F for each one. If the learner chose wrongly an adjective would appear that was marked phonetically for gender (not all adjectives are thus marked). The learner would have to type out the adjective together with the noun before proceeding.

This worked satisfactorily, and many students said they found it useful. However, some of the brighter ones complained that the exercise confused them; it had, they claimed, the disastrously counterproductive effect of actually making them feel uncertain about the gender of words that they would have got right had they not thought about it. Colleagues who tried out the program had a somewhat similar experience, as did the author of both the program and of this paper. The phenomenon was described in an earlier article (Farrington, B. 1986). It can be seen that it raises interesting questions concerning the relation between implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge, between the native speakers' knowledge "of" the language and the linguist's knowledge "about" it, between explicit thinking and unthinking intuitions. The question is not without relevance to other forms of tutorial CALL.

Whatever about that, other preoccupations intervened, and the idea of a CALL package to help learners of French to cope with the problem of noun gender was shelved for twenty years. This brings us to the software we are presenting here.

Fig. 1 Genders. French vocabulary software developed by Faro Systems.

Two things were borne in mind when designing this present package. First was the fact that our earlier little program actually confused learners, made them less instead of more certain of the gender of common nouns. Closer investigation of this undesirable effect suggested that it was probably caused by the peremptory way in which the learners were presented with a series of words and, for each word, obliged to put their money either on an F or on an M, as it were in the abstract. Therefore, in the new package, rather than confronting the learners with a pair of mandatory, cast-iron, options, they are offered the feminine and masculine form of a number of contexts, usually standard expressions or adjectives collocating with the noun, and invited to choose between the forms. Whenever they feel uncertain which to choose, and this is important, they are encouraged, not to guess, but to click on an icon marked Not Sure, which presents the word in a context fixing the gender, and fixing it audibly. Any words that the learners are thus not sure of will figure in the next batch of words offered.

Secondly, it was decided to give much more importance to context and collocation than to the 40 or more rules discovered by the Canadian researchers. This was not to discount the importance of the rules. (They are in fact indicated to learners using the software.) These rules may well make explicit the knowledge that French speakers have internalised in acquiring the language. But, as it is hardly necessary to point out, native speakers do not learn their language by obeying rules, they acquire it by building the rules for themselves, intuitively, by noticing what words and meanings do, in the complex texture of sound that they hear. What is more, the rules do not help much when it comes to explaining the down to earth manner in which children, and learners, get to know the gender of individual nouns. And they have little relevance to the ways in which native speakers check their intuitions when, as often happens, they are suddenly unsure of the gender of an unfamiliar noun. This is particularly true when one considers that there are more exceptions to these rules among the commonest and most frequently occurring nouns. For example the following twenty words, all of which figure in *Le Français Fondamental 1er degré,* are all exceptions to rules which are valid for more than 80% of nouns in each category: *auto, chanson, commerce, coté, dent, eau, façon, fin, fois, leçon, main, million, neige, page, peau, radio, sens, service, silence, téléphone.* There are a hundred others, equally common.
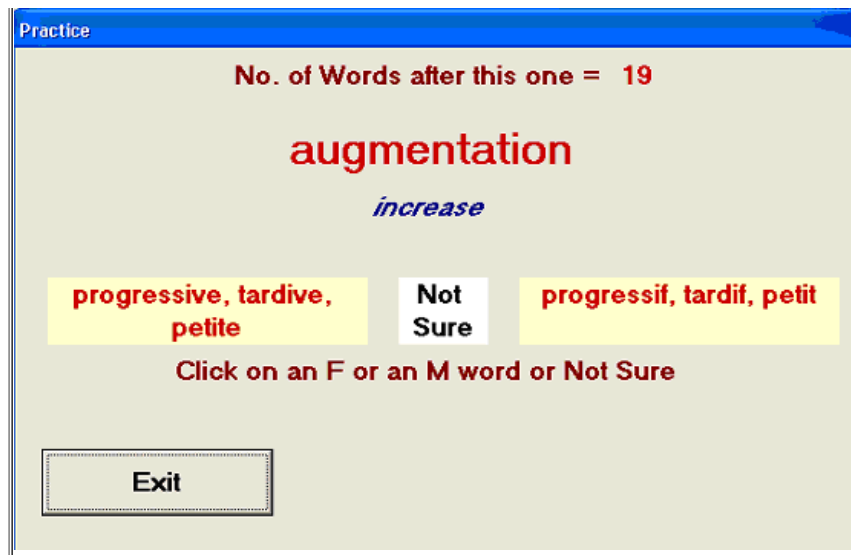
Fig. 2 Different contexts and collocations to choose from, as well as a Not Sure option.

The best approach, therefore, seemed to be, not to try and teach the learners rules, to which the commonest words were often exceptions, but to reproduce the manner in which a native speaker checks the gender of any noun s/he is uncertain of, namely by encouraging them to think in terms of context and collocation. So, as noted above, we present the words, one by one, in batches of twenty as before, with, for each word, two sets of adjectives marked for gender to choose from. And they are given the option of clicking on Not Sure.
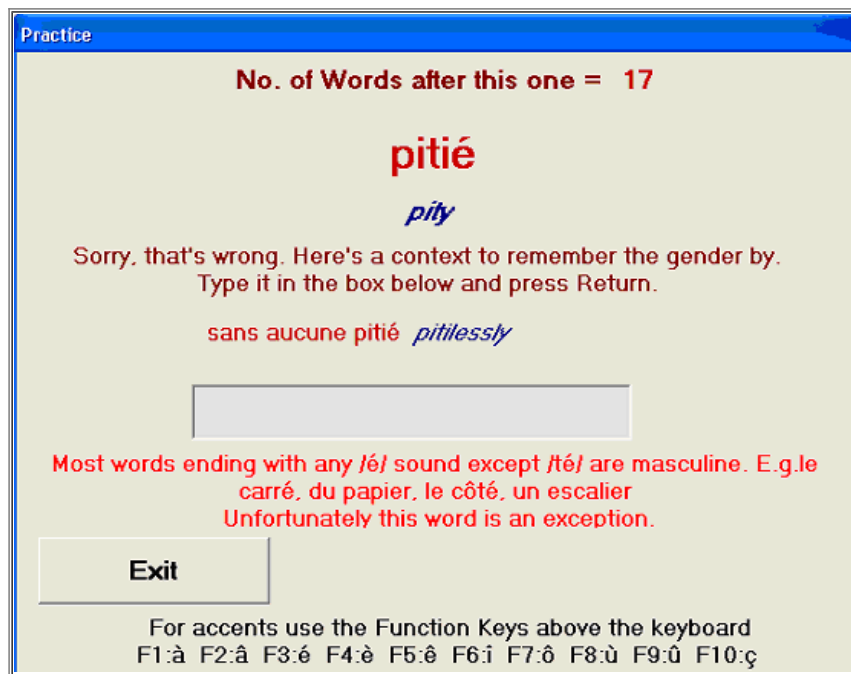

Fig. 3 Example of context to remember a gender by.

The data for *Genders,* containing just over 2500 words, consists, with a few exceptions, of all the relevant nouns in the *Larousse Dictionnaire du Français Essentiel* (Matoré 1963). The 1500 words on Level 1 consist of all relevant nouns in *Le Français Fondamental,* plus obvious homonyms like architecture and garage. Relevant here means excluding words whose gender is set semantically, (*père, maître, neveu*) and also nouns which can be either M or F (e.g. *secrétaire).* The data file contains in addition, for each word, a set of possible collocating adjectives and, where one could be found, a standard expression using the word in a way that makes its gender audible. Compiling all this took some time. We would draw attention to the point that, in the construction of *Genders,* as much, if not more, work and time was devoted to finding and selecting the linguistic content as was taken up by programming.

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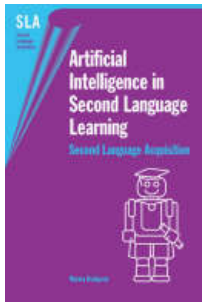
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Book Review

Artificial Intelligence in Second Language Learning

Dodigovic, Marina (2005)

Artificial Intelligence in Second Language Learning. Raising Error Awareness.

Second Language Acquisition series. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

ISBN: 1-85359-829-1 (304 p.)

This book is, at the most general level, an attempt to meet an objective which has been pursued for some years within the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), namely to bridge the gap between the different disciplines that are relevant to CALL. In order to achieve this general goal, the author proceeds in a both exhaustive and cross-disciplinary manner. In fact, it is not usual to find a volume that covers so many CALL-related issues and views in such a comprehensive way and with such insight. Being approximately 270 pages long, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to deal with each and every topic in great detail. And it is indeed not necessary, since the book gathers a number of insights deriving from a heterogeneous group of disciplines, but it does so with a clear pedagogical aim in mind. The aim is to improve the actual learning of a specific language skill within a given educational context by developing a specimen of ICALL (Intelligent CALL) software on the Web. The latter sentence could summarize the whole book, so we will expand it to provide a closer look at the fundamental core of Dodigovic's work here.

The author departs from a pedagogical problem she has to face in the course of her professional career. This problem is the need of a specific student population (University learners of English as a Second Language with Chinese and Indonesian as their L1) to improve their language competence and performance in academic writing (English for Academic Purposes) beyond a certain level where some common errors have been fossilized. Thus, the educational context has been well established from the outset, as well as the problem that has to be resolved. This is one of the strengths of the author's approach, since we agree with some CALL researchers when they criticize the tendency to use CALL and related technologies as providers of solutions for their own sake, without previously analysing a given educational problem that needs to be solved (Clark 1994: 28; Chapelle 2001). In the case of Dodigovic's book, the existence of a real learning problem sparks off the development and implementation of a CALL solution, and not the other way round. Then, after assessing the clear terms and boundaries of this pedagogical problem, the author chooses a solution brought about by the innovative field of Intelligent CALL. This choice has not been made by virtue of the novelty of the technology, but due instead to its pedagogical effectiveness and high degree of appropriateness to a given educational context. This solution implies the development and implementation of an Intelligent CALL Tutor on the Web whose aim is to improve the students' academic writing skills by interacting with them in a dynamic and "intelligent" way, raising the learners' awareness of their errors, correcting them and guiding the students through the writing process in order to help the correction and de-fossilization of these mistakes. Therefore, a great deal of pre-development work and research needs to be undertaken. The book itself is the result of a deep and informed reflection about this process and provides a thorough discussion of all of its phases. To put it in the author's own words, "the Intelligent Tutor whose development and evaluation is described here is intended to exemplify the CALL development practice in its most comprehensive approach" (p. 270). In our view, the field of CALL would significantly be enriched if it could find many more examples of this kind of research and development work.

The book, then, contains plenty of research that sheds light on the software development process. This is in line with a trend in CALL that recommends all instances of software development to have a sound foundation on relevant research. This is why a significant part of the book is devoted to the report of the research work and the review of relevant literature. Nevertheless, this theoretical background at all times keeps an eye on the pedagogical standpoint that is at the heart of this CALL project. Consequently, research provides the theoretical underpinnings to support a very clear line of action that is well rooted in pedagogical practice and based on a specific educational situation. Then, the book is a two-way journey between theory and practice, both of them interacting with each other in a dynamic way. We believe this is another major strength of the book.

The pre-development research work informs the final technological decision of developing an Intelligent CALL program on the Web, rather than any other solution that could have been possible. We think this is the most plausible solution, given its feasibility, for two main reasons. On the one hand, the area of ICALL holds a promise to overcome the drawbacks of former CALL programs in terms of feedback quality and pedagogical effectiveness, as extensively suggested throughout the book. On the other hand, the Web is undoubtedly the appropriate environment to deliver a dynamic ICALL tool, such as this, in a flexible manner.

Apart from the general pedagogical aim that we have just discussed, the book has several other objectives that are closely related to it:
- To reflect upon the possibility that adult learners improve their learning of a Second Language.
- To assess the usefulness of Intelligent CALL to improve Second Language Acquisition (SLA).
- To conduct a literature review of different fields and disciplines that can provide a sound background to ICALL software development.
- To present a case study of a CALL Research and Development project, in order to help other researchers or developers conduct similar projects.

Consequently, the resulting scope of topics and views depicted in the book is very broad, so it can be of great interest to a heterogeneous collection of readers. The author's background is similarly very rich, since she is a CALL researcher, practitioner and developer. She is privileged in the sense that she is also a computer programmer, thus incorporating first-hand computer expertise to the hard task of developing pedagogically sound CALL software.

The book comprises 6 chapters, an introduction, a concluding section, 3 appendices, a bibliography and a subject index.

Chapter 1 gets the title from a question of interest for all language teaching practitioners: "Can Another Language be Learnt?". The problem depicted from the very beginning, namely that university students with a reasonably good command of English still make mistakes in academic writing, helps to sharpen the initial focus. Thus, the question becomes "Can our adult NNS (non-native speaker) university students learn how to improve their erroneous academic English?" (p. 13). In order to answer these questions, the author draws on a comprehensive review of the research literature in the field of Second Language Acquisition, especially of those theories and findings closely related to writing skills, learners characteristics and variables, learning strategies, motivation, interlanguage theory and language ownership and learnability. The two key concepts that are taken into account in this section are: Interlanguage (IL) and Error Analysis (EA). The working hypothesis is that Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing (NLP) can be applied successfully to prevent or undo error fossilizations of the learners' writing errors by conducting an exhaustive investigation of the Interlanguage and the typical errors of a given student population. The findings of such investigations would inform the development and implementation of an ICALL Tutor program that is ready to help those students improve their academic writing skills in English. The evidence from this research review seems to lead us to conclude that the best way to help students improve their linguistic competence is by explicit instruction, opportunities for practice with a focus on form (and meaning), language awareness and error correction. This ICALL project is an attempt to use an application of NLP to implement these SLA concepts in real practice. Therefore, the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter is positive, provided the cognitive, affective and individual needs of the learners are properly met. Accordingly, the next logical step in the ICALL development process is to conduct a thorough needs analysis, which includes "what we know about both our students and the criteria for successful instructional hypermedia design" (p.44). All of these factors will merge in the building up of some key specifications to develop the intelligent software product. Here is one example of the perfect marriage between theory and practice in CALL development, which is achieved from the needs analysis: "our theorising has thus led us to a very practical step - outlining

the specification framework for a tutor from which we expect to contribute to much L2 learning" (p. 45). The final objective is to achieve a perfect match between the learners needs and the characteristics of the ICALL software in order to improve learning outcomes.

Chapter 2 also has a questioning title: "Where Does Research End and CALL Development Begin?". In this section, the relationships between research and development within the field of CALL are discussed, again with the incorporation of a comprehensive literature review. After analysing different research models in SLA and CALL, the author adopts an eclectic approach to research. According to her account, the 2 phases of the CALL development process where research is more likely to play a major role are needs analysis and evaluation. We could not agree more with Dodigovic when she states that "research can and sometimes legitimately needs to either precede the development of CALL programs or accompany it at various stages (…). Nonetheless, research should also follow the application of such CALL software. Therefore, the life cycle of a software program can be said to have completed a full cycle - from research, via development back to research" (p. 53). This chapter includes a detailed description of the ICALL project and its research methodology, and also incorporates some reflections about CALL project management in general from the point of view of Research and Development which will undoubtedly be of use for similar project managers and coordinators.

Chapter 3, "Why the Web?", aims to justify the chosen technology for the delivery of the ICALL project. This justification is twofold. From a theoretical point of view, this technology has the right features that can make an innovation widely accepted among academia. From a more pedagogical and practical perspective, the Web, with the added value of Computer Mediated Communication, provides a high degree of flexibility for the efficient delivery of the Intelligent CALL Tutor.

Chapter 4 is called "Can Computers Correct Language Errors?" and deals with the different technologies within the field of Intelligent CALL that can provide linguistic error detection and correction. Therefore, the chapter is an account of technological fields such as: Parsing, Natural Language Processing, Artificial Intelligence, Intelligent CALL, Intelligent Tutoring Systems, Computational Linguistics, Speech Recognition and Synthesis, etc. The author's aim in this chapter is to find out whether computer technologies can nowadays detect and correct language errors occurring in L2 learner output. As a result, in addition to a comprehensive review of these technologies, the focus in this section lies on the concepts of feedback and reinforcement. Different feedback types and possibilities are thoroughly described and discussed. The conclusion drawn at the end of the chapter is that computers can detect and efficiently correct not only NS (native speakers) discourse, but also NNS (non-native speakers) errors, provided the proper technology is used. The author of this book "has made an effort to try the computer out in its capacity of NNS error correction" (p.139), which, in our view, is a very welcome innovation in CALL.

Chapter 5, "How to Develop an Artificially Intelligent Language Tutor?", describes the development process carried out to create a specific example of ICALL software, the Artificially Intelligent Language Tutor on the Web developed by Dodigovic. Before developing the program, three research studies are described that cast light on what features the piece of software should integrate. These studies analyse, in turn, the various learning styles of the target student population, the characteristics of the target language of instruction (academic written English), and the features of the student interlanguage. The data resulting from these studies are subsequently used by the author to develop a piece of Intelligent CALL software (the Tutor) that could meet the needs of the students and the given learning scenario. The chapter also includes a description of how the program was technically developed by using a programming language called SICTUS PROLOG (by Alyson Fowler and the author herself), as well as some examples of how the program actually works.

In chapter 6, "How Does it Work?", the evaluation of the ICALL software tool is discussed. The evaluation included in this section is mainly formative, with the inclusion of a research study as well as the results arising from the evaluation carried out by teachers and students. Summative evaluation is also present, but in a more limited way. As the author herself recognizes, summative evaluation is not complete in this case, since the ICALL development project was not fully finished at the time of writing the book. From a global perspective, the ICALL software depicted in the book yields satisfactory results both in terms of software engineering and pedagogical effectiveness, although there are some areas in need of further improvement, such as the graphical user interface.

The book is a very comprehensive, detailed and interdisciplinary account of the Research and Development process of a successful example of Intelligent CALL software. The field of CALL can benefit to a great extent from sound research-based and pedagogically-driven projects such as the one described here. Books such as this will no doubt help us ascertain which areas of language learning are most successfully dealt with by the use of CALL technologies.

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Report on EUROCALL Regional Event

Telecollaboration: Integrating On-line Intercultural Exchanges into the Foreign Language Classroom

http://dfm.unileon.es/telecollaboration/index.html

19 - 21 May 2006
University of León, Spain

Telecollaboration refers to the activity of engaging language learners in intercultural exchange with students from other cultures through the use of on-line communication tools such as e-mail and message boards in order to improve their communicative and cultural skills in the foreign language. As a quick glance at any recent CALL journal or conference proceedings will confirm, this activity has become extremely popular among language educators as these exchanges have been shown to hold great potential for both language and culture learning. However, exchanges often fail to function effectively due to organisational difficulties, intercultural misunderstandings and a lack of appropriate planning and co-ordination between both sets of teachers and learners. With this in mind, a workshop was held on the weekend of the 19th of May 2006 in order to bring together a group of experienced international practitioners in this area who would use their sessions to help participants to set up and structure exchanges in a pedagogically sound manner and also to develop a battery of techniques which would allow them to work with the problems and misunderstandings which are common in such projects.

A group of over 40 foreign language educators and researchers came together at the University of León in Northern Spain to take part in the workshop. The participants were mostly university lecturers and researchers but the group also included some secondary and primary school teachers and students of Foreign Language Didactics from local Spanish universities. While a majority of participants came from Spain, many other countries were represented including France, Belgium, Italy, Ireland, the UK and Australia. The event was based around five main workshop sessions (each lasting two hours) which introduced the participants to different aspects of on-line exchanges and how they could be integrated into their classes. Most of the presenters combined a presentation with periods in the computer laboratories where participants had an opportunity to have hands-on time with the communication tools and resources which had been illustrated in the sessions.

While teachers use many different configurations to structure the types of tasks and to establish to what extent students should use their target language and their first language, several distinct models of telecollaboration have emerged in recent years which offer practitioners relatively defined structures within which to organise their on-line exchanges. Therefore, the first section of the workshop looked at three of the best-known models of on-line exchange: **Breffni O'Rourke** from Trinity College in Dublin introduced the *e-tandem model* of learning, which is based heavily on the principles of autonomy and reciprocity and which represents probably the oldest and best-known form on on-line intercultural exchange. Breffni also gave participants the chance to take part in an on-line MOO environment, a powerful synchronous communication tool which is not well known among educators. Following that, **Jim Crapotta** and **Jesús Súarez** from Barnard College, New York presented the *Cultura model* which highlights the intercultural learning possibilities of such exchanges and is based on the comparison and analysis of parallel cultural texts. Finally in this section, **Isabel Pérez** from the University of Granada in Spain also spoke about the value and potential of relatively low-tech *traditional e-mail exchanges* and showed many practical examples about how such exchanges can be put into practice at primary and secondary school level.

The second part of the workshop focussed on questions and issues which regularly emerge from the research literature and from the practical reports on on-line projects. **Andreas Mueller-Hartmann** from the Paedagogische Hochschule in Heidelberg, Germany, for example, outlined the role of the teacher in on-line exchange and discussed issues such how exchanges can be set up and how to deal with emerging problems and misunderstandings. **Paige Ware** from Dallas in the USA looked at the role of grammar acquisition in on-line exchange and underlined that progress in grammatical competence is not an automatic outcome of on-line interaction and that careful structuring of tasks combined with student preparation and training and a pro-active role on behalf of the teacher are necessary to ensure the maximum benefit for learners. Paige illustrated her ideas with specific examples of tasks and authentic extracts from an on-line exchange between students in the USA and Spain and which forms part of an on-going TIRF research project being run by her and this author.

At the end of each day of the workshop, round-table sessions were held which involved a group discussion between participants and the presenters who had carried out their sessions on that particular day. This gave participants an opportunity to ask questions, expand on issues which had emerged and to report on their own personal experiences. On the final day of the event, participants were also offered the opportunity to make short presentations (15 minutes) reporting on their own work in this area. There were 10 presentations in this section of the workshop and they included reports on various interesting projects which are being run in Spain as well as in Egypt, the UK and Belgium. These short reports provided participants with practical examples of e-twinning and e-tandem projects, and even 'e-tridem' projects which bring together learners in three different locations.

As regards the social aspects of the exchange, on the Friday afternoon of the workshop a guided walking tour of León was provided by the organisers of the event and on the Saturday afternoon the local council of León (la Diputación) provided a food and wine reception for everyone in the historic part of the city.

Since the workshop, a special blog has been set up to provide those interested with a bibliography and other resources based on the topic of telecollaboration. The presenters have also published their powerpoints on the website (http://dfm.unileon.es/telecollaboration/). Furthermore, some of the presenters at the conference and the conference organiser have started work together on a book based on introducing the key aspects of telecollaboration to teachers at second and third level.

I would like to express my thanks to the Eurocall Committee for allowing me to use the Eurocall name and the Eurocall network for supporting and advertising the event. I believe the event has proved the value of regional workshops for Eurocall as it provided an opportunity for 'first contact' with the organisation for many people and it also allowed researchers and practitioners who are more familiar with Eurocall to come together outside of the main conference for a focussed period of collaboration and exchange together based on this interesting area of research.

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Report on EUROCALL Regional Event

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Multimedia Language Learning - where are we now?

9 February 2006
University of Portsmouth, UK

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Following on from the UK workshop in 2005 at the University of Ulster on Web-based and local teaching modes in CALL, the theme for this workshop was "Multimedia Language Learning - where are we now?" The event was held in the multimedia Melissi language labs at the University of Portsmouth and was 25 delegates from across the UK, including a number of Russian visitors who were on an exchange visit to learn more about multimedia language teaching and learning. Delegates attended a total of 4 workshop sessions on a variety of issues: multimedia language learning policy, the authoring tool MALTED, web-based learning and lab-based learning. The overall feedback from delegates was very positive and many expressed an interest in attending future events. It was also clear that the event proved useful in highlighting the work of EUROCALL and the general CALL community by introducing colleagues to areas of multimedia learning that many previously had little or no knowledge of. The event was organised by Dr Margaret Clarke who kindly offered the University of Portsmouth as an ideal venue for the event. I look forward to working with other colleagues to stage future workshops in other institutions across the UK.

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Events Calendar

For information on events, please refer to http://www.eurocall-languages.org/resources/calendar.html, which is regularly updated.

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