



European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning

EUROCALL Newsletter

Issue number 2, March 2003

Editor: Ana Gimeno

ISSN: 1695-2618

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ReCALL Journal

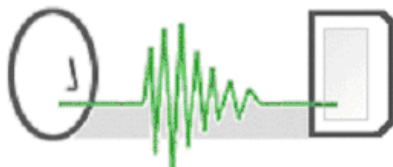
The forthcoming issue of *ReCALL* (Vol. 15, Part 1) will be distributed to EUROCALL members in May/June 2003.

Please send articles, software reviews, details of relevant events or other items of interest for future issues to June

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All articles are considered by an international panel of referees. Notes for contributors can be found at: <http://www.eurocall-languages.org/recall/contrib.htm>

Reports on EUROCALL Special Interest Groups



Integrating Speech Technology in (Language) Learning (InSTILL)

This report covers the activities of the SIG during 2001-02.

It is divided into the following sections:

1. Elections of Board
2. Activities in 2001
3. Activities in 2002
4. Planned activities in 2003 and 2004
5. Publications
6. The future

1. Elections of Board: The SIG elected its board of 6 members and c-opted two more. Current board members are as follows:

Jared Bernstein (representing ISCA)
 Kathleen Egan (representing CALICO)
 Ton Koet (representing EUROCALL and Secretary)
 Steve Larocca (representing CALICO)
 Philippe Delcloque (representing EUROCALL, Executive Director and Treasurer)
 Michael McTear (representing ISCA)

The current Board was elected on 31 January 2001, following the SIG constitution, it co-opted the following two members with voting power:

Marisa Castagno as co-webmaster (from CALICO)
 Rodolfo Delmonte as co-editor of the future InSTIL Journal (from EUROCALL).

2. Activities in 2001

The SIG held its first electronic election in January 2001. It worked on the sequel to the *History of CALL* by producing an 18 poster exhibition called "An Illustrated History of Speech Technology in Language Learning". This was shown at two important conferences in what was then the European Year of Languages, the first EUROCALL 2001 in Nijmegen, Holland and the second EUROSPEECH 2001 in Aalborg, Denmark. The exhibition was officially opened by a trio of US professors, Michael Cohen, Ron Cole and Dominic Massaro who also received the first "InSTIL Prize for Outstanding Lifetime Contribution to the Integration of Speech Technology in Language Learning" for their contribution to knowledge via the production of the CSLU toolkit.

The SIG was also invited to present its work as part of the first SIG Show at EUROSPEECH.

The SIG wishes to thank its parent associations EUROCALL and ISCA for allowing it such exposure, it also wishes to thank EUROCALL for its thousand pound loan and ISCA for its thousand euros donation without which much of this work could not have been undertaken.

In late 2001, the SIG received news from IALL that it had been accepted as an affiliate association of the organisation which has now renamed itself IALLT for International Association of Language Learning Technology (see <http://www.iallt.org/>).

3. Activities in 2002

2002 was the year of the second two day event in the life of the SIG. InSTIL 2002 brought back many of the leading specialists in the field in the very pleasant surroundings of Davis in Northern California. The meeting was organised by Delcloque, Egan and Larocca with the support of the excellent local organising team and CALICO executive.

In early 2002, the new SIG web site was mounted at <http://www.instil.org/> the site is still under development but more details of the 2002 workshop, notably all its participants can be found there. The feedback from CALICO on the work of InSTIL was very positive, indeed InSTIL 2002 was very well received by the US-based CALL association members. A review of InSTIL 2002 was published in the ELSNET newsletter.

ISCA invited the SIG to set up a Special Interest stream at the ICSLP speech conference in Denver, Colorado in mid September '02. InSTIL was kindly represented by Anita Kulman at this event where close to 15 papers on ST in LL were presented.

The second electronic election for the 6 Board members is planned for April 2003. The Board will be elected for 2 years until 2005.

4. Planned Activities for 2003 and 2004

The only event which InSTIL may be present at in 2003 is the Interspeech Conference in Geneva which will run the first 3 days of September. The SIG may make a joint presentation with Synsig.

The SIG plans to hold its third main event, the InSTIL 2004 Symposium in late June 2004 in Venice, a fuller announcement will be made no later than the end of April 2003 when the Call for Papers will be sent. It is anticipated that the two and a half day event (Thursday to Saturday morning) will allow up to 50 plenary presentations and may be attended by as much as 100 scholars.

5. Publications

The first two InSTIL books are still due to appear as soon as possible. They represent revised versions of the work shown in InSTIL '99 and InSTIL 2000. The titles of the books are as follows:

Delcloque, P. (ed) (2003) *Progressing Interface Transparency: Speech Applications in Computer Assisted Language Learning*, InSTIL Publications.

Delcloque, P. (ed) (2003) *Speech Technology in Language Learning and the Assistive Interface*, InSTIL Publications.

InSTIL is still considering publishing its web-based refereed journal with a launch in September 2003. Subject to funding, the journal may be produced on paper to select subscribers. It is anticipated that the InSTIL Journal will be published twice a year with up to 5 articles in each issue.

6. The future

The SIG will hopefully benefit from a new dynamic Board elected in April 2003. The new context of shared responsibilities and increased funding will, we hope, result in the SIG become more dynamic in the range of its activities.

Philippe Delcloque
The University of Manchester, UK

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Projects

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The DIGITALENKLAS Project

DigiTalenKlas is a two-year project (partially funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education) aimed at the innovation of language teaching in Dutch higher education through ICT. Four higher education institutions (the Faculties of Arts at the universities of Utrecht, Groningen, Leiden and the Language Centre of Tilburg University) and a private company, Edufocus, are involved in the project, which started in October 2001 and will be concluded by December 2003. In 2001 and 2002 Blackboard and Web-CT courses for the languages involved (Dutch, English, Spanish and Arabic) have been developed, tried out by students and evaluated. The other output of the project is **ELLIPS**, a new web-based multimedia CALL application, which is currently under testing. Materials development in *Ellips* will start in March 2003.

Specific features of *Ellips* are:

- **Authoring module.** *Ellips* includes a web-based and user-friendly authoring system, with templates for listening, grammar and pronunciation practice (including the possibility to give detailed feedback)

- **CEF coding scheme.** *Ellips* makes use of metadata derived from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. These metadata allow any content developer to re-use materials produced by colleagues in partner institutions. The materials (exercises, pictures, audio and video files) are all stored on a password-protected web-server.
- **Adaptive exercise mechanism.** A scoring mechanism keeps track of students' performance, offering additional exercises for areas not yet mastered.
- **High-quality streaming audio and video on the web.** Dutch universities make use of a high-end Internet infrastructure. *Ellips* makes use of this in delivering exercises for listening and pronunciation practice.
- **Web-based recording.** *Ellips* makes use of a web-based language recorder. Student input may be saved to the web for review by teachers and peers.
- **Unicode support.** *Ellips* is fully Unicode compatible and supports non-Western characters (like Arabic) and special fonts (like IPA).

Ellips will be hosted as a web-based service and made available to what we hope will be a growing community of users.

Project co-ordinator: University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

For further information contact: s.jager@let.rug.nl

or visit the project website (in Dutch): <http://www.let.uu.nl/digitalenklas>

The project was presented at Eurocall 2002 (the paper is available at http://dms.let.uu.nl/docs/wp4/Eurocall_2002.doc, the PowerPoint presentation at http://dms.let.uu.nl/docs/wp4/Eurocall_2002.ppt). Version 1.0 of *Ellips* will be presented at Worldcall 2003.

Alessandra Corda
University of Leiden, The Netherlands

Design of on-line interactive language courseware: conceptualisation, specification and prototyping

Research into the impact of linguistic-didactic functionality on software architecture.

Researchers and developers in the field of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) are confronted with one of the most intricate questions in recent years: which software tools, components and protocols are most efficient for designing, developing and implementing on-line interactive language courseware?

Interactive language courseware refers to language learning programs which offer a number of linguistic-didactic functionalities such as content selection, content interaction, generation of exercises and tests, feedback, help, follow-up of the learning process, reporting, remedial activities or natural language routines.

The pressure to offer on-line interactive language courseware increases, given the societal importance of the medium and a number of attractive technological advantages. On-line applications are programs, which offer the user the possibility to interact with another system through modem or network. This interaction is regulated by a number of available software components and protocols, which are called technologies.

The on-line language learning programs, which have been developed up to the year 2002, show a serious decrease in linguistic-didactic functionalities and in overall interactivity in comparison to applications which have been realised earlier on CD-ROM. This restriction seems to be intrinsic to the applied technology itself.

The approach taken in this project is the pedagogy-led approach: first define what is needed in terms of functionalities and then evaluate to what extent available technologies allow us to realize them. The goal of this research project is to try to prove that sufficient linguistic-didactic functionality can be realised online by applying an adequate design model.

The methodology of this research project is based on the elaboration and application of a design model.

The elaboration of the design model is based on a study of CALL literature on design, on a study of the broader interdisciplinary context and on my own CALL design & development experience.

The application of the design model to this specific research topic includes the three design stages conceptualisation, specification and prototyping.

- The conceptualisation phase is not based on one particular concept for particular learning situations, but on a number of linguistic-didactic functionalities which have been realized earlier in stand-alone applications or which have been described in literature in order to obtain an ambitious yet realistic design model.
- The specification phase then tries to define the architecture and components of this generic model.
- During the prototyping phase discrete elements are tested with common technologies.

Jozef Colpaert
DIDASCALIA, University of Antwerp, Belgium

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Recommended websites

MIT-UPV WEB-BASED COLLABORATIVE EXCHANGE PROJECT

<http://mitupv.mit.edu>

A web-based collaboration project between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the School of Design Engineering (ETSID) at the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV).

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Current Project Partners:

- MIT (USA)
- ETSID at UPV (Spain)
- The University of Texas at Austin (USA)
- University of Valencia (Spain)
- University of Cambridge (UK)

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the School of Design Engineering at the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV) in Spain, have been working together since 2000 on a web-based project whereby undergraduate and graduate students, as well as teaching staff on both sides, exchange multimedia documents (graphics, video, etc), messages and ideas via the World Wide Web. The project has a website maintained by MIT, and the UPV has been working for one year in the development of a sister website. Multimedia documents including video files and messages are posted onto the website by the participants.

Some key features of the project are:

- It is student-centred. Made by students for students, all the website contents (video, graphics, links, presentations...) are developed, created and chosen by the students themselves with the help of university staff.
- It is open to many different people (under- and postgraduate students, university staff, professionals,...) all over the world.
- It includes the exchange of digital video and images made jointly by students and staff and updated in real time.
- It is open to new developments and content depending on the students' own interests, ideas and needs.
- It acts as a store of knowledge and expertise which has been submitted to the websites over time.
- It is multifaceted and organises the information to be submitted in different thematic sections.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To learn and practice languages in a communicative and authentic way.
- To address the concepts underlying an ideal university system by reflecting on how universities are now and how they should be according to the students themselves, rather than according to the institutional governing bodies.
- To exchange first-hand information on curricular and extracurricular matters (traditions, culture, current affairs, etc).
- To learn how to handle new technologies via the Internet and the World Wide Web (multimedia editing, digital video, up and downloading, etc).
- To make international friends and establish links between institutions.

This collaborative project website has two major characteristics that make it ideal for the practice of CALL in a contextualized and natural way: it is highly interactive and it is updated in real time whenever there are new uploads. Moreover, it includes a significant cultural and social element, and can integrate multimedia objects, i.e. the possibility of working with oral as well as written discourse. But the purpose of MIT-UPV Exchange is not merely to practise language, but to communicate in the broadest sense. Students choose the content of what they up- or download with no censorship. Since many different student backgrounds and ideas are gathered together, the website is also seen as a way to reflect upon one's own culture, university system, etc., as well as those of the people at the partner institutions. This reflecting on university systems carried out by the students themselves -as opposed to accepting a given curriculum or given values- is seen as a tool for accomplishing one of the ultimate aims of the project, namely the student-centred construction of the ideal university system, which for the moment is still "virtual".

The homepage of the project presents a Flash animation with pictures from MIT and UPV together with a window to type in the user e-mail address. There are two ways of visiting the project website. The first one is as a guest, for which no password is needed since guests are not allowed to upload content onto the website. The second option is the really active one and is password protected. Members of the virtual learning community, once logged in, can upload and download any kind of content on the page, including multimedia objects such as video fragments, graphics and web links. Videos and pictures are normally homemade by the students and staff themselves, combining audio in English and Spanish so as to make language practice possible both ways. Text messages also show this free alternation of languages, even within a given individual message.

When the user has logged in, (s)he has all the interactive sections at hand. The structure of the website is clearly displayed from the very first page and comprises the following sections:

- *Spotlight*. A discussion topic that changes from time to time according to the results of a built-in voting device open for use to all registered students and staff. There is a bulletin board, a place to contribute web links and a multimedia section.
- *Teach Me*. It is the place to see and make multimedia presentations by using an online authoring software called WimpyPoint, similar to Microsoft PowerPoint, which allows the learner to create presentations with slides, texts and graphics. Instructions are sometimes tricky to follow, but on the whole it provides a quite stable and reliable creative platform.
- *People*. This is the section displaying the hyperlinked names of all members that have taken an active part in the project since it started. The highlighted names, also to be found all over the site, are links to the individual's "workplace", where information about the person, together with the corresponding electronic mail, is available.
- *Cities*. A two-column screen -with Cambridge (USA) and Valencia (Spain) at either side- again gives access to a thematic bulletin board, WWW links and multimedia sections about both cities.
- *Chat*. Another built-in facility to enable connected people to chat in real time.
- *Calendar*. This part is also fully interactive for registered users, who can consult as well as submit important dates, together with detailed information on forthcoming events and their personal comments.
- *What's New*. This section records the latest contributions to the website, the newest users' information, in a thematically organised fashion, thus allowing the user to locate these submissions on the website with ease.
- *University*. This can be regarded as the bulk of the site, and its most interactive section. It is a discussion forum whose first page displays the topics on which the learners can locate and retrieve information, objects, multimedia files, and, most importantly, they can also contribute content if previously registered. These topics are: academics, extracurricular activities, sports, majors, residences, social life and traditions. Each one of these sections has the same structure, with a bulletin board, a place for WWW links and a multimedia uploading and downloading area.

Technically speaking, the website is a robust platform for exchange where manipulating, up- and downloading and retrieving information is not too difficult, given the problems usually associated to this kind of multimedia exchange environments in real time. Nevertheless, the system presents some understandable bugs every now and then and also experiences Internet access and net traffic issues. Graphic design is not among its most outstanding virtues, but the quality of information exchange makes up for this. On the other hand, some sections on the website seem at first sight chaotic spaces where information and files are piled in a disorganised list-like way. Nevertheless, this should be clarified by saying that the organizing principle within each category of uploaded objects, whether they are text messages or multimedia files and commentaries, is simple "time": the lists are based on the time of the upload. Moreover, there is a democratic, free and open philosophy underpinning the whole project, where it is totally up to students to shape and manipulate content at their discretion. This is, as a matter of fact, a strong point for the website, as far as the communicative language learning methodology is concerned. Another positive key feature is the originality of the proposal from a cultural and social standpoint, as well as the fact that both graduate, postgraduate students, teaching staff and, in the case of UPV, also technical staff, are at liberty to interact in a free and organic way. In so doing, institutional, professional and personal links can appear quite naturally. Students can also benefit from some kind of serendipity learning when "playing" with the multimedia

content, especially the video sequences, which are exchanged easily and naturally. However, one of the most remarkable innovations will be seen when the project authors request students to jointly work towards the idea of the "ideal university system". This will emerge from the students themselves as they reflect on their own university experiences and the role of higher education in today's societies.

Review by Rafael Seiz Ortiz
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Publications by EUROCALL members: review

CALL Software Design and Implementation: The Template Approach

Gimeno, A.. (2002) *CALL Software Design and Implementation: The Template Approach*, Valencia: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, 141 page book, ISBN 84-9705-099-1. Available from agimeno@idm.upv.es

This book was published in 2002 by the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the institution where the author is based and where she has been involved in various pioneering international projects developing CALL software for the acquisition of foreign languages for the past ten years. It is a book, therefore, which showcases the author's expertise from a practical point of view. The R&D group which she leads has produced quality interactive CALL programs successfully over the years by following the template approach to authoring, and whose rationale and design issues are discussed throughout this book. As a matter of fact, it is the work of a language professor and researcher, a CALL practitioner who reflects on instructional design for language learning out of experience, rather than from a merely theoretical point of view.

The book is concise and focusses on real examples of good CALL practice. It is divided into six chapters, an appendix containing examples of real questionnaires for needs analysis, and a bibliography of both printed and electronic references. The overall structure proceeds from a general, more theoretical view and rationale to the contextualised presentation of actual template examples. The opening chapter is an introduction to the CALL programs developed by the author in co-operation with several other researchers and institutions, and serves to put the later examples of practice within a context. It is full of references to CALL projects which the interested reader may seek out. The second chapter, entitled First Considerations, discusses some of the issues and questions to be considered before starting the CALL project development process, such as the target group, needs analysis, the pedagogical approach and the sound use of educational technology, the latter being at the heart of the whole book. The following chapter, Personnel and Tools, argues that qualified people and suitable support software must interact in a co-ordinated way in order to develop a coherent and successful CALL application. Chapter 4 discusses some of the most important instructional design features to ensure user-friendliness from a pedagogical point of view. Key design issues concerning feedback, exercise interface, reference and help materials, and so forth, are explored and considered as elements of prime importance to ensure that the final product is easy to use and supportive of learner-centredness. The following chapter is a brief but wonderfully concise and clear account of the major components of the template approach to CALL software design and development. It even includes a rationale for its use which could not be expressed in fewer words or more clearly. The author explains why she adopts this approach rather than other authoring options at hand and certainly does so in a very convincing way.

The central part of the book is contained within Chapter 6, Template Examples, where the reader finds actual examples of template implementation for the main activities found in CALL courseware. Although at first sight this section seems rather repetitive, a closer look at the content justifies the inclusion of so many template examples corresponding to different exercise types. This chapter is more closely addressed to technical staff (programmers and the like) than the rest of the book, or at least to those who are more familiar with CALL authoring and development. Thus, the template approach is not discussed around a purely theoretical framework for CALL, but conceptualised as a practical method which is useful for teachers, researchers and software programmers alike. And the examples given show that the template approach allows for the creation of variety even within very similar exercises. This is actually one of the main advantages of CALL programs, i.e. to cater for different delivery formats adaptable to different situations and study styles with little technical modifications at the authoring level, thus promoting learner autonomy. The way in which this can be technically achieved is demonstrated in the book, in general, and in chapter 6 in particular.

Chapter 7 is an appendix presenting examples of questionnaires used prior to developing the main features of CALL multimedia courses, that is to say, at the needs analysis stage. The author herself is professionally involved with the teaching of Languages for Specific Purposes, a field where needs analysis plays an important role in course design. This probably explains, if any explanation is needed, Dr. Gimeno's interest in this preparation phase. Anyone who wishes to further explore the actual CALL programs which were developed by applying this approach can follow up the references to them at the end of the book, together with a bibliography of theoretical and practical CALL texts. Though brief, this reference section is sufficient for the purposes of the book.

The template approach to CALL software design and development is one in which people with diverse interests and backgrounds, i.e. technical programmers, language specialists (often a teacher) and graphics designers, work partly in an independent way and partly in close co-ordination, keeping the building blocks and features of the course separate until they are finally assembled in a coherent whole aiming at improving the learning of languages through technology. The book develops this idea in a beautifully concise way. Some readers might have preferred more discussion, on the other hand the book sets out to take no more of our time than necessary to explain the niceties of this authoring approach. This work, unlike many of its sort, addresses the technical developer as well as the CALL practitioner or researcher, and there is indeed a need for this kind of publication if both groups are to work together in the CALL software development process. The book reads smoothly and, although there could perhaps be more bibliographical references, it bridges a gap in the CALL literature between CALL teachers and their partners, the software programmers.

Review by Rafael Seiz Ortiz
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Events Calendar

For information on events, please refer to the [EUROCALL Events Calendar](#), which is regularly updated.

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Last updated January 1, 2014

