



European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning

EUROCALL Newsletter

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Table of Contents

[ReCALL Journal](#)

[Projects](#)

[Recommended website](#)

[Postgraduate diploma course: *Effective Use of the Internet in Language Teaching*](#)

[Publications by EUROCALL members](#)

[Events Calendar](#)

ReCALL Journal

The forthcoming issue of **ReCALL** (Vol. 15, Part 2) will be distributed to EUROCALL members in November/December 2003. Please send articles, software reviews, details of relevant events or other items of interest for future issues to June Thompson, Editor, *ReCALL*, EUROCALL Office, The Language Institute, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX, UK, E-mail: euroll@hull.ac.uk.

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>



Projects

The BP-BLTM (Best Practice - Best Language Teaching Methods) Project

The BP-BLTM project is a two-year project funded by the EU commission with a Leonardo II grant. The project was launched in November 2003.

The project is coordinated by Kent Andersen (Odense Tekniske Skole, Denmark) with partners from the Basque country, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Scotland, and Spain. Three of the partners are EUROCALL members.

The objectives of the project are to portray five communicative language learning methods in a manual with demonstration lessons on DVDs. For each of the methods the project develops ready-to-use materials. The target groups are teachers and students working with less taught languages like Basque, Danish, Dutch, Gaelic, and Romanian. To ensure a wider use of the developed materials everything is also adapted for English, German, and Spanish.

Everything developed in the project is "CopyLeft", which is a way to license a work so that unrestricted redistribution, copying and modification is permitted, provided that all copies and derivatives retain the exact same licensing.

The first method portrayed was CALLiC (Computer Assisted Language Learning in Context). The manual describing CALLiC can be downloaded from the project website www.languages.dk/methods in English, German, Romanian, and Spanish. The material developed to demonstrate CALLiC can also be accessed from the project web, or can be launched from a CD-ROM distributed at EUROCALL 2003. To obtain a copy of the CD-ROM e-mail ka@ots.dk.

The material comprises web-quests and a text with video (in two language levels; basic and intermediate) showing how to wire a standard British plug. The text is hyperlinked to the eight project languages so any sequence can be translated and watched / listened to in eight languages. The text/video is followed by a sequence of exercises.

The videos have also been transferred to a DVD so one can watch the instructions in eight languages with a choice of eight subtitles. This is probably the first time that one can watch a Gaelic technical instruction with Basque subtitles!

The materials were tested in a class learning Danish. A video recording of the lessons with English commentaries and subtitles in English, German, Romanian, and Spanish can now be ordered on DVD. There is handling fee of 5 Euro for copying, and mailing. The DVD is of course CopyLeft! E-mail ka@ots.dk for more details.

Both the DVDs and CD-ROMs will in the near future be available as disc images ready to download and copy.

The next method described in the project is "Task Based Teaching". The manual is still being revised by the project teams and will soon be available for download from the project web in English, German, Romanian, and Spanish. The remaining three language teaching methods are *Tandem Learning*, *Simulations*, and *PhyEmoC* (the Physical, Emotional, and Cultural approach). If you register your e-mail address at www.languages.dk/methods you will receive the project Newsletter and notifications when new materials are available. The e-mails will be sent with non-disclosed recipients to avoid misuse of your address.

For further information contact [Kent Andersen](mailto:Kent.Andersen)

[Top](#)

Recommended website

Centro Virtual Cervantes

The [Centro Virtual Cervantes](http://cvc.cervantes.es) (<http://cvc.cervantes.es>) is the Internet-based branch of the Instituto Cervantes, the official Spanish institution commissioned to disseminate the use and study of Spanish language and culture around the world.

Since its creation in December 1997, the CVC rapidly became one of the most important reference sites devoted to Spanish language and culture on the web, having reached an average of over 100.000 visitors a month. This increasing number of visitors is primarily due to the great variety of resources available at the CVC website, which attract both professionals and public in general. These resources range from announcements of cultural events -included under "Actos Culturales"-, the four discussion forums -each of which focuses on a specific topic-, and the language classroom ("Aula de Lengua") -designed for both teachers and learners of Spanish.

The CVC front page enables direct access to the entire contents which are well structured, and organised in a very user-friendly manner. The centre frame is devoted to current cultural events and is therefore constantly up-dated. The sections included are listed on the left and right hand side of the main menu page.



Sections

1. Under the heading "Actos Culturales" (Cultural Events) we encounter a list of the most important events related to Spanish and Hispano-American culture: art, literature, photography, architecture, historical archives, etc. Thus, we can become pilgrims and delight in the "Camino de Santiago", learn about it's legends, admire some of it's magnificent landscapes, etc.; we can follow a photographic tour of Spain by clicking on "Paisejes de España"; we can listen to the poet Rafael Alberti's voice, or review Luis Buñuel's cinematography as displayed in a recently inaugurated exhibition.

2. The CVC has published a considerable amount of language teaching materials that are found under "Aula de Lengua" (Language Classroom). This section is useful for both students and teachers of Spanish as a foreign language. It comprises:

2.1. "Diplomas de Español" (Spanish Language Diplomas) includes information, sample examination papers and interactive exercises with immediate feedback for students preparing to take the Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE) -the official language diplomas awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Education.

2.2. "Rayuela" gathers interactive language games and pastimes, published on a daily basis, specifically designed for learners of Spanish at different levels. Access is available to the entire archive of activities, which amounts to a total of approximately 700 entries, which can be selected according to the learner's level, to didactic content (grammar, functional, cultural, etc.) or according to type of interaction (crossword puzzle, hang man, hidden words, etc.). Some of the pastimes also include an item called "Y además..." (And in addition...) which invites learners, in a pedagogically sound way, to give some thought to the linguistic or cultural features being practised.

2.3. "Otros materiales" (Other resources) features a collection of interactive learning materials which aid in practising specific language items as well as offering samples of spoken language.

2.4. "Aula Virtual de Español" (Spanish Virtual Classroom). In this section we encounter a description of the Instituto Cervantes' most ambitious project, a full programme of distance-learning courses known as "Cursos de español en internet". Aimed at young and adult learners from around the world wishing to acquire full competence in Spanish through internet-based activities, the courses are designed to offer students every kind of resource currently available through internet technology. The courses are based on the general language curriculum offered in classroom courses at the Instituto Cervantes -which distinguish four learning levels: beginners, intermediate, advanced and proficiency- and on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students can register in any of a series of sixteen modules -four in each learning level. It is foreseen that a distance-learning teacher-training course will also be developed.

3. On-line communication and exchange of information are organised through four specialised discussion forums:

3.1. The "Foro didáctico" (didactics discussion group) focuses on issues relating to language teaching and learning. Teachers of Spanish from all over the world exchange views and experience.

3.2. The "Foro del español" (Spanish discussion group) is aimed at translators, journalists and those professionally linked to the Spanish language.

3.3. The "Foro del hispanista" (Hispanic discussion group) enables communication between teachers of Hispanic literature, art or cultures.

3.4. The "Foro TIC" (ICT discussion group) offers a means of discussing issues relating to terminology for those who work in the area of information and communications technology.

Each discussion group has its own Notice Board (Tablón de Anuncios) that gathers information about forthcoming events such as conferences, seminars and courses as well as a number of links to interesting sites for each of the target groups. Thus, the didactics discussion group's notice board includes a section describing proposals to set up tandem learning between fellow students from different countries which can be very useful for teachers interested in telematics.

4. Under the heading "Obras de referencia" (Reference works) we encounter a vast number of documents. Among them are:

4.1. An electronic version of the most recent and complete critical edition of Cervantes' Don Quijote de la Mancha with hypertext links, accompanying bibliography and lexicon.

4.2. An archive of Spanish grammar, "Archivo Gramatical de la Lengua Española", unique in its kind in that it gathers Spanish language quotations organised from a grammatical point of view and presented as a database to facilitate searches. It contains over 100.000 examples ranging from the earliest stages of the Spanish language up to today, extracted from diverse sources.

4.3. The Instituto Cervantes' 1998 and 1999 Annual Reports on "El español en el mundo" (Spanish in the world) which cover issues in relation to the reality of Spanish language in today's world and comprises an essential tool for individuals and institutions directly related with Spanish.

4.4. "Hispanalia" comprises a database of institutions and cultural organisations existing in Spanish speaking countries.

5. Lastly, another interesting section is called "Oteador" (Watcher). It comprises a comprehensive search engine specially designed to assist in searching for specific information relating to Spanish language and culture.



Ergonomic aspects

When visiting the Centro Virtual Cervantes we perceive a very good impression as to speed, ergonomic aspects and ease of navigation. Its graphic user interface has been carefully designed and its contents are classified in a coherent and comprehensible way. The links to other related sites have been meticulously selected and are listed according to relevant areas of interest.

The site's title bar, located at the top of the screen, also serves as main menu bar giving access to all the sections described above. Once a section has been entered this menu bar shows the different subsections included in a given section, in addition to a link to its main index. Becoming familiar with the site's navigation takes very little time although an aid is included under the heading "Instrucciones de navegación" (Navigation Instructions) for those who may need extra help. The only element that permanently remains on screen is the CVC logo, linked directly to the main contents page.

With regards to the didactic materials, we would like to point out the high quality of the sample examination papers available for those preparing for the official Spanish language diplomas, and that of the pastimes. The latter have been carefully designed to adjust to the web environment therefore enhancing their suitability for learners of Spanish. All the pastimes include a very useful introduction explaining the main goal of a given activity and the activity proper (crossword puzzle, association exercise, etc.) is found further down the screen and accessed by moving down with a scroll bar. Some of these explanations, however, are necessary in order to successfully carry out the activity therefore one has to continuously scroll up and down the screen to read the pertinent information. We suggest that another means of presenting this information, such as a floating window, could be used to avoid this constant scrolling. The advantage of a floating window is that it can be dragged over the screen so as not to interfere with our work and allow us to concentrate on the activity.

Another interesting feature found in the "Diplomas de español" section is the effort that has been made to include feedback when an exercise has been completed both correctly and incorrectly. This undoubtedly allows students to reinforce their acquired knowledge. The learning environment created is in all senses adequate for its goal.

Since the entire CVC site is in Spanish, autonomous learners of Spanish at beginners' level could perhaps feel a bit lost since all the explanations and instructions are written in Spanish. Tutors therefore have an important role to play here since all the materials included can also be used as a complement to more traditional classroom teaching. Students will no doubt benefit from carrying out a great variety of activities that focus, not only on Spanish language, but also on cultural aspects of Spanish speaking countries.

Conclusions

The CVC site definitely makes the most of all the new features available in ICT and WWW technology and offers learners and teachers of Spanish as a foreign language a world of resources, ranging from virtual cultural events to on-line courses, which are coherently organised and carefully designed.

We highly recommend this web site to anybody interested in the Spanish-speaking community and more so to those who would like to learn more about Spanish language and its linguistic and cultural diversity, whether as learners, teachers or professionals working in related fields.

Ana Gimeno Sanz, Cristina Navarro Laboulais

(Previously published in *ReCALL* Vol 12 No. 1, May 2000)

[Top](#)



Postgraduate diploma course

Effective Use of the Internet in Language Teaching

The Graduate School of Teaching and Learning of the University of Amsterdam has started an on-line postgraduate programme in new technologies and language learning. The postgraduate diploma course, *Effective Use of the Internet in Language Teaching*, is part of this programme. It consists of three main elements:

- a series of five modules aimed at providing the necessary pedagogical knowledge and skills
- a design project task aimed at developing web based language materials for a specific learning situation
- an essay containing a critical discussion of the relevant literature

The students' workload for the diploma course is 18 European credit points of 28 hours each (504 hours in total).

This postgraduate diploma course on the effective use of the internet in foreign and second language teaching is aimed at graduate students or graduate professionals (e.g. language teachers, language tutors, language material developers, teacher trainers in initial and in-service training) who wish to develop their expertise in the pedagogical and theoretical implications of the use of the internet in foreign and second language teaching and to improve the relevant technical skills.

On completion of the postgraduate diploma participants may use the credit points towards a master's degree in New Technologies and Language Learning. There is a possibility to do further work towards a PhD. As the University of Amsterdam does not require residence, the PhD can also be completed on-line. Elements of the programme are also offered in face to face interaction during three summer courses of the Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University (<http://www.amsu.edu/courses/language/#lang2>, also listed in the Comenius catalogue).

For further information, see: <http://www.ilo.uva.nl/english/pgdiploma/default.asp> or mail [Ton Koet](mailto:ton.koet@ilo.uva.nl)

[Top](#)



Publications by EUROCALL members: review

Language Learning Online: Towards Best Practice

Felix, Uschi (ed.) (2003) *Language Learning Online: Towards Best Practice*, in Language Learning and Language Technology series, Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers. ISBN: 90 265 1948 6 (214 p.)

Language Learning Online: Towards Best Practice is a collection of articles from different experts across Europe, Australia and Northern America. They all work in the area of language teaching and learning and are prominent experts in the subject domain. The book has been structured in three parts: Design, Tools, and Pedagogy. The idea is to draw together the crucial elements of building a successful learning environment for language teaching and learning. This book can be said to be the first of its kind in Europe: a book that is not just about one side of CALL or WELL, but actually looks at the entire scenario and takes the reader through the various aspects giving him/her practical pointers, pedagogic ideas and food for thought along the way.

The Design section deals with the set-up of an online language learning course or setting. The first of the two authors in this section, Dominique Hémard writes about designing towards user acceptability. By this he means the kind of designs where the focus is on usability and user-centeredness. The supporting content for this kind of design comes from the field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI). In his design thinking he is not talking about instructional design per se, but software or application design. The article touches upon some of the pedagogical considerations as well, but only in passing. This is probably a planned editorial policy, since this section of the book deals mainly with the technological aspects of CALL. One may question, however, how these two can be kept apart and what purpose that would serve. Nevertheless, this article is a very helpful introduction to the world of design concepts and does build nicely into the design themes discussed later in the volume (e.g. in Bangs, Felix and Davies's articles).

Robert Godwin-Jones in turn examines the creation of a web course site from the perspective of adapting general-use software specifically for language learning use. The emphasis is not on "what" is being used, but on "how" it's being used. He walks us through a multitude of different web-based applications (including some Learning Management Systems, LMS) and very informatively explains their suitability and shortcomings in respect to various language teaching purposes. The article is very concrete and instructive; it certainly gives the reader good pointers as to how and where to start setting up web-based learning sites. It would have been interesting to read a few lines on the "why" this or that software is being used along with the "how". That is, what the teacher is aiming at and achieving with the use of a certain course structure or integrated electronic feature, or how that addition/feature is a part of the desired chain of events in a given course.

The Tools section consists of four articles covering various aspects of technological applications and their adaptability to language learning. Steward Arneil and Martin Holmes write about "Servers, clients, testing and teaching". Even if the title is quite far-reaching, the article is mainly concerned with the technical aspects and details, giving the reader essential guidelines and specifications in the area. It is an intense information package on metadata, LMS's, student tracking mechanisms, standardisation, and the very current idea of learning objects. Despite the "techie" content, the writers share their expertise and pedagogical ideas of implementation and use of the various technological possibilities in a way that it is easy for even a non-technical reader to follow.

Paul Bangs's article could easily be placed in the Pedagogy section of the book. It emphasises the fact that without solid pedagogy any given tool is as good as the next one. He writes about feedback as one of the corner stones in learning and about how that feedback can be planned, structured and individualised. He also, to my great delight, raises the issue of instructional design being the bridge between pedagogy, academic design, and the interactivity of an application. He spends a considerable amount of time substantiating his point about the importance of designing feedback mechanisms both from the point of view of the learner, but also from the medium used. His partial answer to the issue is the MALTED authoring tool that uses a flexible template approach for easy creation of various types of exercises using different media elements.

The Lesley Shield's introduction to MOO's in language teaching and learning is a comprehensive account of the ideology, educational use and language learning advantages of these environments. The writer is right in saying that language teachers' use of these environments is not very wide-spread due to different misconceptions and lack of knowledge of how these could be meaningfully utilised as a part of a language course. She offers ample advice for the non-technical user and presents different learning situations and contexts with actual examples of learning activities. This thorough description of MOO's and MUD's in a language learning setting will unquestionably help teachers understand the idea of these environments and their contribution to more novel ways of teaching and learning languages.

Patrik Svensson expands the range of available tools towards virtual realities and mobile technologies even. In his article he examines the constructivist learning theories in the context of a three-year Virtual Wedding project. In this project the writer and his colleagues have attempted at creating a language learning environment where language learning meets the ideas of social worlds, where non-physical and physical spaces and virtual realities are bundled up into a visual, hypertextual learning arena. The objectives of the project, the realisation of the pedagogical ideas and the students' appreciation of the learning setting all sound very encouraging. The only "surprising" element is the attempted use of Bloom's taxonomy as the basis for skills development. For there are several language professionals who question the taxonomy's worth and accurateness for today's language learning.

In the first article of the Pedagogy section the editor of the volume, Uschi Felix takes on the challenge of identifying and closing the missing links in online language learning. The challenge is by no means minute. The three missing links the author identifies in her article are the lack of proper feedback mechanisms, the challenge of creating online learner communities and the need for (better) systems for teaching and learning oral skills. She closes these links by offering ways in which these shortcomings can be met at least half way. She first presents different pedagogical perspectives and goes on to describe various online facilities that offer advanced features for language learning. The article is mostly about language courses that are offered completely online. One may ask if this is really how we, language professionals, want to face the future of language learning. Distance learning is a branch on its own, but as far as at least partial campus-based language learning is concerned, wouldn't it be best to treat online and offline teaching as different entities and make suitable combinations of these two?

Regine Hampel and Eric Baber examine the use of Internet-based audio-graphic and video conferencing tools for language learning. They first look at the available tools and then place these in different learning settings within different course designs. They highlight ways in which meaningful learning activities can be built around these tools and how these affect the way in which the teacher and learner roles are defined in these learning situations. The reader will get a good grasp of the potential of the medium and is given lots of points to consider when setting up courses where these tools are used.

Graham Davies offers in his article perspectives on offline and online training initiatives. He emphasises the need for proper training

for language teachers as an ongoing process and not just on a one-off basis. He outlines the type of content suitable for this kind of training and draws examples from the [ICT for Language Teachers](#) (ICT4LT) online training course. He goes on to presenting some solutions for the training issues in the form of the New Opportunities Fund training initiative and the [CILT-NOF](#), [ICT4LT](#) and [Talent](#) projects. Despite the fact that the situation and solutions are somewhat UK-based, the reader gets a very good idea of the current situation. The author's many years of experience in the field is clearly visible in his approach to the topic.

One area that has been left almost to its own devices for one reason or another is the assessment and evaluation mechanisms and forms that would support and promote the ideas of autonomous learner and life-long learning in technology supported learning environments. This certainly is a theme that deserves a book of its own, but it is becoming more and more difficult to design language learning environments without paying extra attention to the ways in which evaluation and assessment would accommodate for the various learning processes, learner styles and course objectives. Evaluation as a process tool is not just about feedback, tests and quizzes, it is an integral element of the pedagogical implementation of a course or any other learning setting. This point does come across in some of the articles, but still not as an area of focus on its own.

Somewhere in the book, it would have been interesting to hear commentaries and perhaps even critical voices on the things said. As we all know, development and advancement of ideas occurs more likely in an environment of diversified opinions than in the aura of unison and hum. Also, it is becoming more and more evident that CALL/WELL will eventually need to evolve towards a more multi-disciplinary outlook involving ideas from educational scientists, sociologists, educational psychologists, applied linguists and so on. Inviting contributions from people from these areas in books like this would be one step leading to that direction.

All in all, this book is definitely recommended reading for anybody interested in developing technology-enhanced language learning environments. It offers an up-to-date view into the world of CALL/WELL. Uschi Felix has succeeded in finding suitable and qualified authors for the different aspects of the area to create an optimal mix for the reader. The book definitely maintains a good balance between the technological and pedagogical aspects and approaches, and is clearly written by people who know their business.

Review by Peppi Taalas, Researcher
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[Top](#)



Events Calendar

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

[Top](#)

Back issues:

[No. 1 Nov. 2002](#)

[No. 2 March 2003](#)

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