



European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning

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ReCALL Journal

The forthcoming issue of *ReCALL* ([Vol. 18, Part 1](#)) 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, Editor *ReCALL* d.j.thompson@hull.ac.uk

The journal contents are listed at:

http://www.eurocall-languages.org/recall/r_contents.html

All articles are considered by an international panel of referees. Notes for contributors can be found at:

<http://www.eurocall-languages.org/recall/contribnotes.html>



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Report on EUROCALL Special Interest Group

CORPUSCALL

Diversification of corpus-related activities within EUROCALL

EUROCALL 2005 revealed that the interest of the language teaching community in the use of corpora for language learning and teaching continues and begins to take more specific shape. These developments led two SIG members, Ylva Berglund (Oxford) and Sabine Braun (Tübingen) to design a new pre-conference workshop on 'Using corpora in language learning and teaching - introduction and expert talk'. The well-attended workshop aimed to demonstrate the wide range of possibilities for corpus applications in the learning and teaching context. The emphasis was on developing concrete ideas of how the participants themselves can use corpora in their specific learning and teaching scenarios and on the use of freely available resources for this purpose. To cater for both beginners and more advanced corpus users, the workshop was organised in two sessions, where the first more introductory session was followed by a session which included presentations on four relevant topics: creating your own corpus (Rafal Uzar, Łódź), using corpora as a writing aid (Íde O'Sullivan, Limerick), using parallel corpora (Hans Paulussen, Leuven), and research on learner corpora (Penny MacDonald, Valencia). A workshop on corpus applications in the context of language learning, teaching and translating is also planned for 2006.

The conference included 15 corpus-related presentations. There were 12 presentations from 8 countries (BE, CA, ES, GE, IE, JP, PL, UK) in the Corpora and language learning strand, which can broadly be divided into corpus consultation and corpus development in the pedagogical context. The potential of corpus consultation in language learning and teaching was demonstrated for a variety of contexts including the enhancement of teacher education, the support of a process-oriented approach to literacy development and language learning, the analysis of discourse features for language learning purposes and the development of proficiency tests. The presentations focussing on corpus development for pedagogical contexts covered the creation of BNC Baby, a genre-specific corpus developed on the basis of the British National Corpus, corpus compilation and annotation for language learning/teaching purposes, enrichment of corpora with multimedia language learning materials, development of a speech corpus incorporating a slow-down algorithm for the audio files as well as corpus development for teaching translation.

This was complemented by 3 presentations from Japan and Germany in strands on CALL and Language for Specific Purposes (using an ESP corpus for

material development), Assessment and Testing (teaching and testing vocabulary with a corpus-based approach) as well as Learning with the WWW (the corpus-based Chemnitz Internet Grammar). In addition, two corpus-related poster presentations focused on providing a free guide to high quality resources on the Web and on the development of a spell checker for language learning purposes on the basis of a learner corpus.

The presentations demonstrated a noticeable diversification of corpus uses in the learning and teaching context and a shift from the more traditional uses of corpora in linguistic research towards uses with specific pedagogical goals in mind.

During the conference, the CORPUSCALL SIG held its third meeting, welcoming new members, summarising its activities over the past year and planning the above-mentioned workshop at the EURCOALL 2006 in Granada. To facilitate co-operation and sharing ideas, short profiles of SIG members including their main research interests and work areas will soon be available at the SIG website <http://www.corpuscall.org.uk>.

Sabine Braun, University of Tübingen, Germany
Ylva Berglund, Oxford Text Archive, UK
Angela Chambers, University of Limerick, Ireland

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Projects

PLEVALEX - A new platform for Oral Testing in Spanish

Computer assisted language testing has become a common educational feature. The fact that large servers allow teachers to investigate and implement new ways of teaching has been revolutionary in the past five years. Now that TOEFL and IELTS are currently operating their new tests online, it is necessary to obtain similar tools for many different languages at reduced costs. To this end a group of 15 researchers from the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV), investigating in the field of Languages for Specific Purposes, has been working for the past two years on designing a new tool for written and, more importantly, oral testing that can cater for a number of current educational needs in Spain: diagnostic tests for Erasmus students, internal university exams, official university entry exams, and preparation for the Cambridge, Trinity, and TOEFL exams. This new platform has been called PLEVALEX (Plataforma de evaluación valenciana de lenguas extranjeras). This article gives a brief description of the platform, its sections and uses. Although PLEVALEX was originally designed to test Spanish and Catalan, it is also transferable to other languages.

How does PLEVALEX work?

PLEVALEX is basically made up of two different sections, each of which comprises a different tool operating in conjunction with each other. The tool was designed and implemented with funding by the Valencian Community Department of Education (HIEO tool) and UPV (HIELE tool).

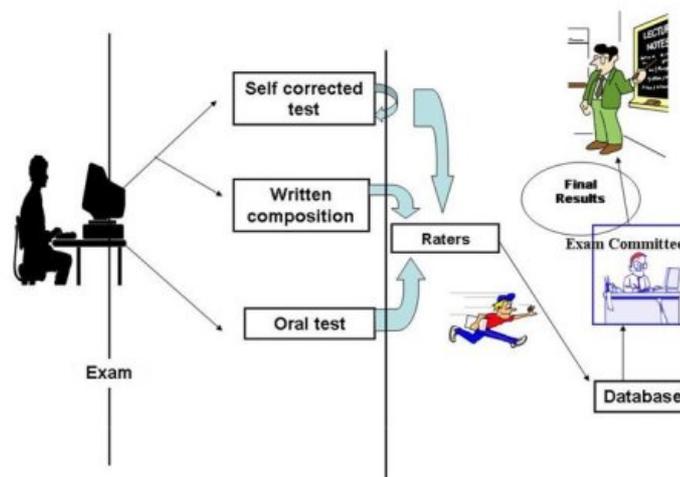


Diagram 1: Test taking process through PLEVALEX

As we can see above, Diagram 1 illustrates the process of exam taking in a computer room. First, the student has to complete two sections devoted to use of language: a computer corrected multiple choice test and also a written composition with different possibilities of prompts, including videos and audio sequences. Diagrams 2 and 3 illustrate these sections. As mentioned above, although the platform can be used in a variety of foreign languages, its trial version has been developed in Spanish.

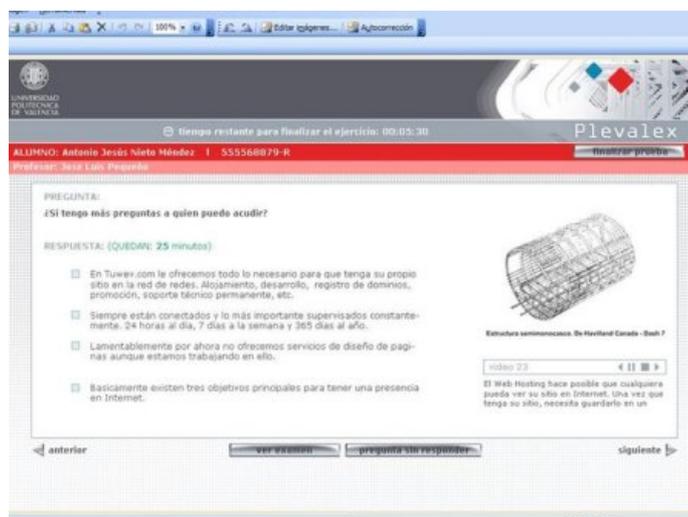


Diagram 2: HIELE tool - Multiple choice section

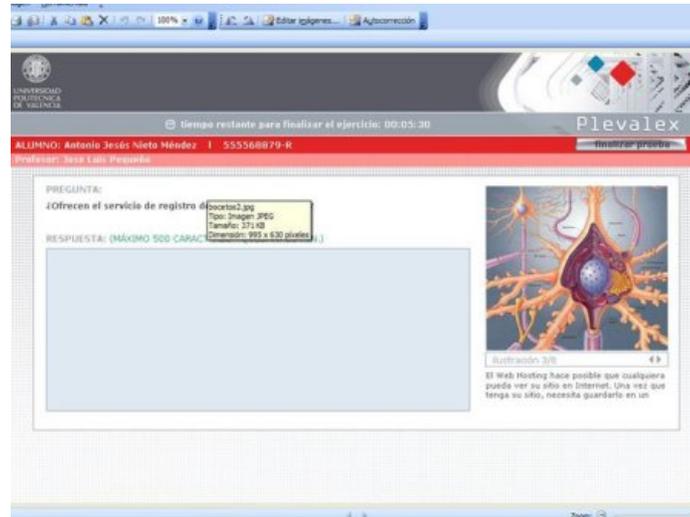


Diagram 3: HIELE tool - Writing composition section

After completing these two sections, the student will take a third one, the oral test. One of the main project achievements is the system that has been developed to store and play short images in real time for up to 500 students taking the test simultaneously. Mathematic calculations allow us to believe that this number could easily be increased up to 1500. The third section reproduces three types of questions: very short ones (informal and conversational style), medium sized conversations (up to 3 minutes) followed by questions, and diagram description and interpretation such as pictures or classroom diagrams. Diagram 4 shows how the student would see the first part on his computer.

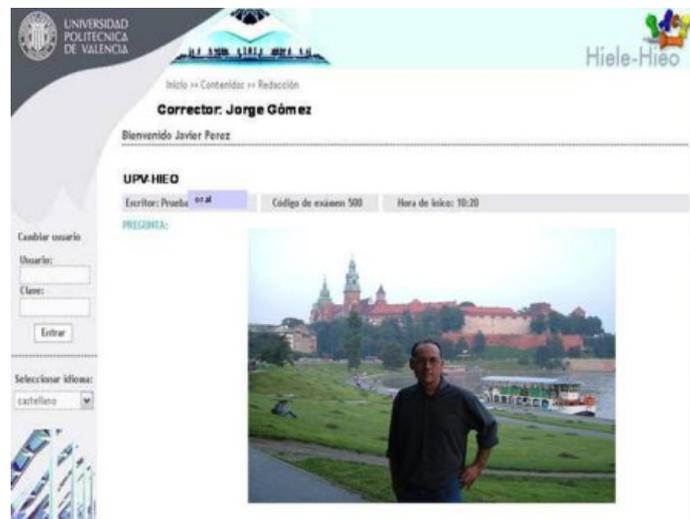


Diagram 4: HIEO tool - Oral test. Section 1 (personal short answer questions)



Diagram 5: HIEO tool - Oral test. Section 3 (Diagram description)

Afterwards, the data is stored and transferred to the raters section in the backoffice. They will be able to retrieve the information and play the students' recordings as many times as necessary. Then the scores are transferred to the database and finally grouped and analysed accordingly.

Conclusions

Our expectations are to complete the trail phase by this coming spring and to start formally using the programme for internal university purposes in June 2006. Some of the studies mentioned below have addressed some of the drawbacks that the project has encountered including connections and transfer rates, learner strategies, washback, etc. Overall, we think that the project has been successful although we are well aware that a lot remains to be done in

terms of diagnostic analysis, etc.

Further reading

So far the Beta version has been reported on in a number of studies. These studies focus on prospective analysis and expectations. The following constitute our main contributions.

García Laborda, J. et al. (2004) "Propuestas de diseño web para evaluación lingüística" *Interlingüística* 15: 597-604.

García Laborda, J. & Bejarano, L.G. (2005) "Análisis de la necesidad de creación de páginas web para la evaluación y baremación de estudiantes internacionales: una experiencia internacional" *Proceedings of the XXII International Conference of the Asociación Española de Lingüística Aplicada*. Valencia: UPV.

García Laborda, J. & Enríquez Carrasco, E. (2005) "Expectativas institucionales del proyecto HIELE/HIEO en Internet en la baremación inicial (diagnóstico) de lenguas para fines específicos a gran escala". *Las TIC en el aula*. Madrid: UNED.

García Laborda, J. & Enríquez Carrasco, E. (2005) "Rater support provision in the HIEO assessment web based tool" *Proceedings of the IV International Conference Aelfe*. Cáceres: UEX

García Laborda, J. & Enríquez Carrasco, E. (2005) "¿Es HERMEX una plataforma válida para diagnosticar lingüísticamente? Un análisis funcional". *TEAM*, 3.

García Laborda, J. (2004) "Parámetros de diseño para exámenes orales online" *Proceedings of the III International Conference AELFE*. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

García Laborda, J. (2004) "HIEO: Investigación y desarrollo de una Herramienta Informática de evaluación oral multilingüe" *Didáctica. Lengua y literatura*, 16: 77 - 88.

García Laborda, J. (2005). "Expectativas Institucionales del proyecto HIELE / HIEO en Internet (e intranet) en la baremación inicial (diagnóstico) de Lenguas para Fines Específicos a gran escala" *Las TIC en el aula*. Madrid: UNED.

García Laborda, J. (2006) "Deficiencies and Realities of Projects of Online Language Exams Up-to-date". *Proceedings of the First TAAAL Conference*. Castellón: UJI.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements are due to the Valencian Community Department of Education and to UPV for funding the project. I would also like to thank the following researchers for their contribution to the project: Emilia Enríquez Carrasco (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia) who is co-author of many of these studies and project manager, Luis G. Bejarano (Valdosta State University, USA.), Slabon Software of Madrid (PLEVALEX programming), Lola Cuenca (Media and filming supervisor), Marie France Collart, Josefa Contreras Fernández, Daniela Gil Salom, Mercedes López Santiago, María Amelia Plasencia Abasolo and Inmaculada Sanz Alava from Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, and especially to our new associates Cristina Pérez Guillot, Noemí Pozuelo, Ana Gimeno (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia), and Honesto Herrera Soler (U. Complutense Madrid).

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Book review

Análisis metodológico de cursos y recursos para el aprendizaje de inglés como segunda lengua a través de la World Wide Web

Rafael Seiz Ortiz (2006) Valencia: Editorial UPV, 369 pages



This book—available only in Spanish—has grown out of the research Seiz carried out for his doctoral thesis (completed in 2004 in the Applied Linguistics Department of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain). The general aim of his research was to establish a sound framework for the pedagogical analysis of Web-based CALL resources, especially in the area of English as a Second/Foreign Language. Whilst maintaining this underlying purpose, the book also has a number of more specific objectives. These are:

1. a review of research literature relevant to Web-based CALL and language learning pedagogy from different, though related, fields,
2. the creation of a systematic method for the pedagogical analysis of Web-based language learning resources,
3. the subsequent development of a feasible tool to implement such an analysis,
4. the pedagogical study and evaluation of some existing Web-based language learning resources (for English), and
5. a consideration of the benefits or drawbacks of using the World Wide Web as an efficient environment for language learning from a pedagogical standpoint.

It is important to note that the book, though already fairly comprehensive, represents work in progress, and is seen by the author as a starting point for further multidisciplinary research work. Seiz includes suggestions for research, some of which, we learn, is already being carried out in the Applied Linguistics Department of the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV).

Following an introductory first chapter, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide a theoretical review and discussion. Chapters 5 and 6 consider some practical applications of the theoretical issues discussed in the first part, while Chapter 7 contains an account of the analytical tool which Seiz has developed. Chapter 8 draws together the ideas discussed in the book and offers suggestions for future research. The annotated bibliography is usefully divided into topics and there are three appendices, one of which is in the form of ready-to-use PC-based software called *WIRESLAB*. This is an interactive database for the pedagogical analysis and evaluation of Web-based CALL resources that has been jointly developed by the author and Miguel Macías, a computer programmer from UPV.

As mentioned above, Chapters 2-4 are the most theoretical. Chapter 2 discusses some key features of the World Wide Web as a feasible environment for successful and efficient computer-assisted language learning. We learn something of the history of the Web, as well as some of the fundamental aspects of Web technology and the principles of Network-based learning. In this Chapter, Seiz also reflects upon the future of the Web for language learning. As one might expect, he believes that it is, or at least has the potential of being, a viable environment for successful communicative language learning.

Chapter 3 attempts to provide a state-of-the-art account of the possibilities for language learning offered by the Web and which have been reviewed in the literature. Issues discussed here include classifications of resources, studies on the pros and cons of Web-based language learning and previous suggestions for both analytical and descriptive frameworks and for pedagogical evaluation tools.

The purpose of the somewhat dense and long Chapter 4, is to establish the theoretical foundations from which an analysis of the Web, and Web-based resources, for language learning purposes can properly be carried out. It is from this foundation that Seiz develops the evaluation software which he describes in subsequent chapters. The theoretical foundation is laid by carrying out a comprehensive review of the research from various fields related to language learning and the Web (specifically, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Language Learning Pedagogy and Methodology, and Educational Psychology, gathering together the major findings from this research, and organising these into a coherent and usable framework.

In Chapter 5, Seiz incorporates the key findings from the literature review in the previous chapter to develop an interactive database (the software included with the book) which can be used to analyse Web-based CALL resources for language learning-teaching purposes. The database (based on Microsoft Access), is called *WIRESLAB* (which stands for Web-based Interactive Resources for English as a Second Language Analytical Base), and uses 170 parameters drawn from the literature review to analyse Web-based CALL resources from different perspectives. The parameters are divided into 5 categories: (1) Identification data (structure, objectives, level, etc.); (2) Technical data (technical aspects including user-friendliness); (3) Pedagogical data (this includes a lengthy list of items, such as exercise type, and incorporates many of the findings from the literature review); (4) Miscellaneous data (additional information such as possibility of customisation, errors, etc.); and (5) Additional standpoints (a space for the points of view of the developers of the resource, other researchers or students). This database also allows for the possibility of conducting advanced searches of resources within a given corpus, such as websites with certain types of exercises or topics. A useful feature is the possibility of presenting statistics, graphs and reports of the resources being evaluated. 170 parameters results in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary tool that can, nevertheless, be readily adapted to different circumstances and needs, since, for example, not all the parameters need to be used at the same time. Seiz provides a detailed explanation of every single parameter, together with a justification for their inclusion.

Chapter 6 presents the results of a field study of 45 interactive resources on the Web for learning English as a second language, using the *WIRESLAB* database, and thus illustrates how it can be of use in real situations. The results of this study support previous research, which indicates that Web-based CALL resources are not being used to their fullest advantage.

A theoretical framework for the pedagogical analysis of the Web for language learning is described in Chapter 7. The framework is 'interactive' in the sense that each component is informed by, influenced by, and feeds back on, the other elements of the model. Seiz gives the framework six dimensions: (1) Theoretical base (drawn from the literature review and Seiz's own research); (2) Specific pedagogical characteristics (features of Web-based CALL resources that can be analysed with the parameters in *WIRESLAB*); (3) General pedagogical characteristics (features of the Web as a language learning environment); (4) Specific pedagogical applications (the potential practical applications of Web-based resources for language learning in a given pedagogical context); (5) General pedagogical applications (the potential of the Web as a place for implementing given methodologies or practices); and (6) Active components (those elements with an active role in Web-based language learning environments). Included here are the teacher, the learner, the content, the medium and the learning context. Thus, the Framework enables the Web as a language learning environment to be studied from many different perspectives in a coherent way. Alternatively, an individual with a particular interest in a particular component could, if he or she so wished, focus only on that aspect.

In the final chapter, Seiz draws together the conclusions from his research and offers useful suggestions for future research. The book also includes an extensive annotated bibliography (classified in 5 thematic sections: Internet and the Web, CALL, SLA, Language Learning Methodology, and Psychology) as well as 3 appendices: a help section for the database, the corpus of the 45 interactive Web resources used in the field study reported in Chapter 6, and the database software.

One of the principal merits of the book is its success in gathering together, in a comprehensive way, the findings from a multidisciplinary background, in order to develop an analytical tool for evaluating Web-based CALL resources on the basis of sound pedagogical criteria. Evaluation can be carried out from a practical point of view (as in the field study, or the development of the software itself), or with an emphasis on theoretical issues (as in the literature review or the development of the Framework). As Seiz himself points out in p. 358, it is necessary to bridge the gap between applied and theoretical research when discussing educational issues in general and Web-based CALL in particular.

The scope of the book is certainly very broad, and at times I would have preferred more treatment of some issues which the author only touches on (for example learning objects, metadata or standards). Nevertheless, the book provides a comprehensive approach to the pedagogical analysis of Web-based environments and resources for language learning that ranges over many issues of both a theoretical and practical nature. Moreover, it includes a database tool which I can imagine being very useful for CALL practitioners. I do not know whether updates of later versions of the software will be available for registered purchasers, but I have always thought publishers should make these available.

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Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Spain

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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

Due to the international nature of the event, the working language of the workshop will be English. However, educators working with other foreign languages (e.g. French, German, Spanish as a Foreign Language) are welcome to attend and participate.

Theme of the Workshop

In our 'networked society' foreign languages educators are often expected by both their institutions and their students to find ways of effectively integrating on-line technologies into their classes. However, while the internet may offer an apparent endless array of possibilities for engaging students with the target language and culture, many teachers often feel unsure about how to use the internet and on-line communication tools in effective ways which are pedagogically relevant and, at the same time, motivating and interesting for their students. This workshop will look at one common on-line activity in foreign language education, on-line intercultural exchanges (commonly referred to today as telecollaboration), and will explore various aspects of this fascinating learning activity.

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. The learning outcomes of these exchanges can be both powerful and enlightening with an amazing potential for both language and culture learning. However, for every example of success which is reported in journals and teacher magazines, teachers have usually heard about 'failed exchanges' from disenchanted colleagues. Organisational difficulties, misunderstandings and the reinforcement of stereotypes are often the order of the day.

This workshop sets out from the premise that organising exchanges which produce positive language learning outcomes should not merely depend on luck. The participating researchers and educators will aim to introduce the skills and knowledge which teachers and students will need in order to ensure that their telecollaborative projects are rich learning experiences which provide ample opportunities for both language practice and intercultural learning.

As the workshop will be dealing principally with how on-line exchanges can be effectively integrated into the foreign language classroom at both secondary- and university-level institutions, we believe that, apart from making a valid contribution in its own right, this event will provide a useful lead-up to the Eurocall 2006 conference which will take place in September 2006 in Granada Spain with its stated focus on the integration of CALL into study programmes.

Location: University of León: Departamento de Filología Moderna

Participants:

Participants should ideally be involved in foreign language education at secondary or university level. No previous experience of using on-line technologies in education is necessary although a basic level of electronic literacy (i.e. knowledge of how to send e-mails and how to use a web browser etc.) is recommended.

As the presentations and discussions will be in English, a good communicative level in this language is also advisable.

Timetable:

Friday (19 May): Morning: Registration and Welcome Address

Friday (19 May): Afternoon: First two sessions

Saturday (20 May): Four sessions and first roundtable event

Sunday (21 May): Two sessions and second round table event

Speakers:

The speakers are all foreign language educators and are also experienced practitioners of telecollaboration. They are:

- Jim Crapotta (Barnard College, New York, USA)
- Paige Ware (Southern Methodist University, USA)
- Andreas Mueller-Hartmann (Paedagogische Hochschule, Heidelberg, Germany)
- Breffney O'Rourke (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland)
- Markus Ritter (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany)
- Jesús Suarez (Barnard College, New York, USA)
- Robert O'Dowd (University of León, Spain)

The sessions will aim to have a balance between understanding research and developing good classroom practice. Participants will be encouraged to take part in discussions based on authentic extracts of on-line student interaction and examples of classroom practice. The themes and issues which the speakers will be covering will include the following:

Different Models of On-line Exchange:

Breffney O'Rourke: *An introduction to the Tandem model of on-line exchange*

Jesús Suarez and Jim Crapotta: *An introduction to the Cultura model of on-line exchange*

Dealing with the Problems and Challenges of On-line Exchange:

Andreas Mueller-Hartmann: *The roles of the teacher in telecollaboration: Setting up and managing exchanges*

Markus Ritter: *Challenges in Telecollaboration: Problems of task design and 'failed communication' in online exchanges*

Understanding The Spanish Context:

Paige Ware: *Language Learning and Telecollaboration: Using on-line exchanges for linguistic development with learners from Spain*

Robert O'Dowd: *Spanish 'Cultures of Use': How the socio-cultural context in Spain influences students and teachers on-line interaction.*

Voices from the classroom:

Participants will have an opportunity on the final day of the workshop to present and discuss their own experiences with on-line exchanges and on-line learning in general. (Please inform the organisers well in advance if you would like to speak during this session!)

Round table Events:

There will be two 'round table events' on the second and final days of the workshop during which all speakers and participants will come together and discuss the questions and issues which have emerged during the individual sessions.

Contact details: To find out more information about the workshop and to receive a registration form, please contact Robert O'Dowd at the University of León:

By e-mail: robert.odowd@unileon.es

By phone: (+34) 987 290184

By post:

Robert O'Dowd

Universidad de León

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Departamento de Filología Moderna

24071 León

Spain

Registration:

The registration fee for participants is 30€. As places are limited, it is necessary to book and pay in advance.

This event has been organised in collaboration with Eurocall, the European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning. The event has been financed in part by the Junta de Castilla León Project: Telecollaboración en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras.

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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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