CALL REVIEW
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Winter 2007

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Price £4.50 Free for SIG Members ISSN: 1026-4280

www.iatefl.org
CALL Review
Winter 2007

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Information for Contributors
CALL Review, the publication of the IATEFL Learning Technologies Special Interest Group, is published three times per year in Spring, Summer and Winter. Publication is open to members and non-members. Membership enquiries should be directed to Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou, the Learning Technologies SIG Coordinator, at: <yiansoph@cytanet.com.cy>. Submission dates for articles and advertisements are:

February 1 (Spring)
June 20 (Summer)
November 1 (Winter)

Full-length articles should be approximately 2,000 words in length. Book, hardware and software reviews should generally range from 750 to 1,000 words. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations.

Although every effort is made to accept articles for publication, the Editor reserves the right to refuse or edit submissions. Articles can be submitted by e-mail attachment to the Editor at: <pete.sharma@btopenworld.com>. The preferred style is the APA format <www.apastyle.org>. Authors should include their full name, address, preferred e-mail address, and a short biography (maximum 50 words).

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Dear colleagues,

We are approaching the end of 2007 which has been an extremely busy year for the Learning Technologies SIG, with seven events: one online, three in the UK, one in Japan, one in India and one in Italy. In fact, we’re just fresh from the one-day event organized in London. The event took place on 3rd November and focused exclusively on Interactive Whiteboards. It was supported and sponsored by the Bell International Institute and was attended by 46 delegates. You can read more about this event in the report which is included in this issue and we have materials from the event uploaded already in our members-only area.

As I write, we have another big conference in progress, this time in Milan, Italy. The conference is called “Learning Technologies: Bridging the Gap Between Technology and Pedagogy”. It is organised jointly with the British Council Milan and has a very exciting programme (available on our website).

In the meantime, even more things are going on. We’ve revamped our website and newsletter and the committee is already working on an interesting PCE on “Digital Audio for Language Learning” for the IATEFL conference in Exeter. Then, there’s the LT SIG travel grants for the international IATEFL conference in Exeter, which had very strong applicants this year and it was very difficult to choose a winner. In the end, the successful candidate is Abderrahim Agnaou from Morocco, whom we are very much looking forward to meeting at the conference.

We’ve also had a call for nominations for the posts of membership officer, events coordinator and newsletter editor. We did not need to have an election since there was only one candidate for each post. As of January 2008, Pete Sharma has been appointed newsletter editor, Rodney Mantle membership officer and Paul Hullock will continue for a second term as our events coordinator. Welcome to all!

The committee is sad to see Michael Thomas go but Michael will still be working with the Learning Technologies SIG in other areas. He’s already working on putting on a second event in Nagoya, Japan this coming Spring. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Michael for his contribution to the SIG. We’ve enjoyed the regular issues of the CALL Review, which have all been both stimulating and enjoyable. Michael also helped the CALL Review move to the new design which was chosen by IATEFL and organised the Wireless Ready event last year. Thank you very much, Michael!

As you can see, 2007 has been a very busy and fruitful year. I hope it has been a good one for you as well, both professionally and personally.

I’ll now leave you to enjoy reading this issue of the CALL Review and please remember that we are always looking forward to hearing from you!

Very best wishes for the festive season!

Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou

Coordinator of the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG

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Editorial

The Winter edition of CALL Review has assembled another series of articles on emerging and traditional CALL. We continue our interest in the use of Interactive Whiteboard technology (IWB) and identify a focus on the themes of interactivity, collaboration and student feedback. IWBs were of course the focus of a recent IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG event at the Bell International Institute in London on 3rd November. They will also figure prominently in another SIG event next year on 29th March 2008 in Nagoya, Japan. Wireless Ready: Interactivity, Collaboration and Feedback, will feature some prominent keynote speakers on IWBs, video in the language classroom and web 2.0. Proposals are still being accepted for papers and further details are available later in this edition of CALL Review.

The Winter edition begins with another in our recent series of interviews with leading figures in the world of CALL. On this occasion, Dr Phil Hubbard, Director of the English for Foreign Students Department at Stanford University agreed to participate and provide an overview of some recent trends in CALL in the USA, as well as a reflection on his career to date.

Other articles in this edition come from Steve McCarty (Japanese Learning Styles in Cross-cultural Online Learning) and John Edridge’s discussion of Moodle and e-learning.

In addition there are reviews of the IATEFL Online conference event at the annual conference this year in Aberdeen (Julian Wing and Gavin Dudeney), a review of EUROCALL 2007 in Limerick (C. K. Jung), and a review of an upcoming site on the use of Camtasia software for student feedback <www.teachertrainingvideos.com>.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have contributed to the CALL Review over the last two years. I’ve enjoyed putting the newsletter together and as this is my last edition as editor, I wish my successor, Pete Sharma, all the best for the next two years. I hope you will all continue to support CALL Review and the good work of the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG around the world.

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CALL in the USA: An Interview with Phil Hubbard

Dr Phil Hubbard is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics and Director of the English for Foreign Students Programme at the Stanford University Language Center. A CALL professional for the past 25 years, he is the author of a number of disk-based and CD-ROM programs for ESL and has published articles across a range of CALL areas, including methodology, research, software development, software evaluation, teacher education, and learner training. He is the co-editor with Mike Levy of Teacher Education in CALL. He also maintains websites on foundations of CALL and a collection of unanswered research questions in the field. He is Associate Editor of the CALL Journal and serves on the editorial boards of the CALICO Journal and Language Learning & Technology. His current interests center on using technology in developing listening proficiency and expanding CALL as an independent field of inquiry and practice. More information can be found at <www.stanford.edu/~efs/phil>

Editor: Thank you for agreeing to this interview with CALL Review. Previous interviews with Carol Chapelle, Mike Levy and Mark Warschauer have offered an alternative space to examine some of the most topical dimensions of CALL, albeit from a less academic and more personal perspective.

An interview is obviously a different format to the academic journal articles we normally associate you with. We hope you'll be able to fill in some of the gaps between your public persona behind your publications and research and some of the personal motivations, all of which might be of interest to the professional development of our readers.

Can we begin by asking you to reflect on your educational background, your work experience to date, and why you got involved with language education?

Hubbard: Sure. I didn’t grow up thinking I was going to work in English teaching. In fact, English was my least favorite subject through high school and into college. I was always fascinated by language though, and during my second year of university I came to believe that human communication was a worthwhile object of study. I switched majors from mechanical engineering to communication at the end of that year and took a number of linguistics courses as well over the next two years. That path led me into a Ph.D. program in theoretical linguistics at UCSD - the University of California, San Diego. I dabbled in phonology before settling on syntax as my main area, and I completed my dissertation studying the grammar of Albanian verbs in a theory called relational grammar. Although my goal at the beginning of the program was an academic career in linguistics, I had the option of getting a master’s degree along the way with a specialization in TESL. I didn’t know anything about that field when I started the program, but I was told it was a useful certification for future jobs in linguistics. I really enjoyed my courses, especially the one on language acquisition, which I wish I had had before I spent all those years struggling in German, Russian, and Spanish classes.

During my last two years at UCSD, the Linguistics Department opened a modest ESL program, and I had a chance to put my education into practice teaching visiting Japanese university students. During the second of those years, I was the instructor for the university’s first dedicated writing course for matriculated international students. I’ve since forgotten the details of my
transformation, but somewhere along the way it became clear to me that I was getting a lot more fulfillment out of my English teaching than my often solitary work on Albanian syntax. So, while I’m grateful for all that theoretical linguistics taught me, I came to the conclusion I’m much more of an applied guy.

**Editor:** Given these beginnings, why did you decide to specialize in CALL in particular?

**Hubbard:** At the beginning of my last year at USCD, I had a course from a linguistics professor where we learned bits of a programming language called SNOBOL that was good at string processing, and I used it to write a reverse dictionary of Albanian inflectional morphology for a grammar book I was working on with my advisor at the time. I knew I was missing a lot of programming basics though. So in the final quarter of my Ph.D. program, when I should have been focusing exclusively on writing my dissertation, I took a break from Albanian syntax and decided to take an introductory programming course from the computer science department at UCSD. In that quarter, I learned to do what was then called “structured programming” using Pascal, a popular computer language of the time.

After leaving UCSD I didn’t do anything with computers for a couple of years, and then in fall of 1982 I found myself at Ohio University, where a professor in linguistics named Marmo Soemarmo was already doing language software development and teaching CALL courses. With his support and guidance, I started playing around with BASIC, which was easy to pick up after knowing Pascal, and I wrote interactive reading and vocabulary exercises for my ESL students on an HP3000 minicomputer. A few months after I started, I switched to Apple II’s and was able to work at home instead of just in the lab. I was hooked. Not only was student and faculty response to my work positive, but I discovered that designing, programming and tweaking the results was a satisfying process itself. I joined CALICO and the TESOL CALL Interest Section in their early days and found that the community of what was then largely teacher-developers was a group I resonated with.

**Editor:** How has CALL developed as a discipline and field of enquiry since you started to research?

**Hubbard:** Well, we have long ago moved away from the teacher-developer era and also away from tutorial CALL as the dominant area. CALL is much more inclusive and covers an enormously wider scope. In terms of research, back in the 1980s, studies often focused on whether using a computer improved language learning outcomes when compared to traditional classroom instruction. The field has largely abandoned that approach because of the many variables involved and the fact that computers are so clearly a part of our everyday lives rather than being something you encountered mainly in course work. We sort of take it as normal that technology can help us and our students, and we focus now on how rather than whether to use technology. In support of that goal there are an increasing number of professional books and journals that are devoted specifically to CALL and a wealth of online information about the field as well.

Another point about the development of the field is that although some CALL experts represent it as evolving through stages, this is an idealization: the reality is that CALL’s growth has been accretive. A few years ago, Claire Bradin Siskin and I wrote an article on the need to reassess the role of tutorial CALL at a time when it seemed
that CMC and WebQuests were beginning to define the field. Our point was that computer-based practice activities still have a significant role to play and that it is possible to construct such activities without making them dull, mechanical or behaviorist. It is possible, in fact healthy, to envision CALL as accretive, where new technologies integrate and complement what has preceded them rather than replacing them. Along those lines I have to admit that I am a bit disappointed that promising areas, such as the development of immersive participatory dramas like *Who is Oscar Lake?*, seem to have been largely abandoned. As a field we often fail to develop an area very deeply before moving on to something new and losing functionality in the process. This is particularly a problem in the research domain, where there is pressure to work on the newest ideas, like Web 2.0 or MALL, in order to get grant funding. The problem is we still don’t have good answers to such basic questions as when to turn text support on or off in multimedia applications in order to facilitate the development of listening proficiency.

**Editor:** Many of our readers teach in Europe or Asia. What is happening in terms of CALL facilities and trends in the USA at the moment?

**Hubbard:** It’s really hard to speak of national or even regional trends anymore since interesting ideas propagate so quickly. Web 2.0 is big in the US, but I think mobile language learning is probably less so than in some other places. In terms of facilities, the influence of course management systems is definitely increasing, but that may be happening everywhere.

**Editor:** You have published and edited a number of book publications in the field. Can you describe what they are concerned with, their relevance to CALL research, and whether there are any connections and sense of development between them?

**Hubbard:** I’ve presented and published in a number of areas over the years as the field has developed, but I do think there have been some common themes underlying most of my work. One is that I try to define CALL in terms of general frameworks rather than applications of specific theoretical positions or language teaching approaches. I believe CALL should be inclusive, though of course I have my own biases when I actually produce CALL activities or applications. A second one is that we don’t know enough to make sweeping claims about what approach is optimal or what would constitute a defensible “best practice” instead of just a “good practice”. A third is that we need to recognize that CALL is not just a subfield of existing views of SLA and it’s not just another form of educational technology. We draw on these and other fields to sculpt a domain that centers on how the computer mediates not only communication, but also information, interaction, and ultimately, language learning.

**Editor:** Over the last few years, many CALL associations and journals have emerged. Do you think we have reached a tipping point or can they all be sustained by the field? Which journals are the benchmark(s) for research that you always like to stay in touch with?

**Hubbard:** It is true that there are a lot of CALL associations and journals out there, but I’m not sure I would say we’ve exhausted the field yet. As I’ve said, there are still a lot of gaps in basic research to fill. The four journals I read with some regularity are the *CALICO Journal*, the *CALL Journal (Computer Assisted Language Learning)*, *ReCALL*, and *Language Learning &
Technology. Besides those four, *System* and a journal that just came out this year, *Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning*, also have some good CALL-focused articles. These are becoming more available thanks to electronic publishing. *Language Learning & Technology* has been online - and free - since its inception eleven years ago. The *CALICO Journal* just went electronic with its latest issue, and although being able to read the full versions of the articles without purchasing them individually requires an institutional or individual membership in the organization, that membership gives free access to PDFs of articles all the way back to the first issue in 1983. Importantly, all the journals I’ve mentioned here are blind peer reviewed, an increasingly essential characteristic for quality when anyone can self-publish these days.

**Editor:** Though they have been around since 2002, Web 2.0 technologies emerged even more strongly in CALL towards the end of 2006. The IATEFL Learning Technologies’ SIG has held a number of events on these new and emerging technologies, but Web 2.0 remains a controversial term. What is your position on these emerging CALL technologies?

**Hubbard:** I wish I had time to explore them. Despite what I’ve said earlier about the need to keep working on existing technologies and applications to develop a deeper understanding of how to use them effectively, I too feel the draw to jump into online environments like Second Life and try them out. I am particularly impressed by the ability to do more with voice and video now, especially in terms of student production and collaboration. In line with previous bandwagons though, I am concerned that a lot of people will be using these technologies without thinking very much about what they’re actually trying to accomplish with them and without looking at earlier research that has relevance for their use. It’s great to get students blogging or collaborating through a Wiki, for example, but these can be viewed at some level as simply fancier versions of the electronic bulletin boards we’ve had since the 1980s. It’s critical to analyze what their specific strengths are relative to curricular objectives and make that match as well as we can. And we also need to be sure that students have some idea of how to use these effectively to foster their learning goals.

**Editor:** Web 2.0 and m-learning bring us to consider the future of CALL and its new dimensions. How do you think the field of CALL is going to develop over the next five years? What kinds of trends in the practical application of CALL can we expect to see develop?

**Hubbard:** Wow, I wish I knew. I can see mobile learning being especially useful for getting listening practice through podcasts and downloaded or online videos. My great hope, however, is that a large number of researchers will keep working at understanding how the computer’s capabilities can best be utilized in the various areas that CALL has already discovered rather than being enticed away to try something entirely new just because it’s new. I think two things are likely to happen as well: 1). the development of techniques and tools to help learners sort through the tons of authentic material available in English (and other languages as well) and procedures for using those resources more effectively once they’ve been identified, and 2). more opportunities for language learners to connect with both native speakers and other learners so that they can actually use the language they’re learning.
Editor: You’re a frequent presenter at international conferences in CALL. Can you describe what makes an effective presentation on a CALL topic? What advice would you give to presenters at conferences, both in terms of making a memorable presentation but also advice on how best to communicate their research?

Hubbard: The advice I’ll provide here is pretty basic, but it’s surprising how many people ignore it at times (including me, I’m afraid). The first thing is to let the audience know why you’re talking to them in the first place. Communicate your motivation for the study, not just the topic. If it’s research, be clear about your hypotheses and why you think they’re important. Along these lines be aware yourself of what you want the audience to take away from your presentation. The second is to have done your scholarly homework and know what others have published on the topic, and especially what other presentations at the current conference may be related. Conferences are not just a stage to present your work; they are themselves a “social space” where collaborations can be born. The third point is to use visuals and text to support the talk but not replace it. Keep text in particular to a minimum, and if you feel you have to put up a lot of text, divide it across slides rather than crowding a lot onto one. Keep tables and other figures at a level of information density that people can follow. Save the full details for the written paper, and let the presentation give the highlights.

I’d also like to take a moment to say something about publications. Do what you can to get your paper in top shape for publication as soon as possible after a conference and then submit it to an appropriate journal. Don’t be timid about submitting, especially if your talk got a positive response from the live audience. Even if a paper is rejected, you can learn a lot from going through the peer review process or even getting feedback from an editor for periodicals that are not peer reviewed.

Editor: Your most recent book is about teacher training and CALL. What are the main issues and challenges involved in this area?

Hubbard: I’ve just finished a paper on CALL and the future of language teacher education, so I have a list handy. A couple of issues that stand out for me are the role of technology standards and the differences between preservice and in-service training. We’re making some progress on standards: TESOL has put together a standards writing team and has already posted a first draft of standards for both teachers and students on their website for comments. With respect to the second issue, the majority of current research and development in CALL teacher education, at least in the US, seems to be aimed at preservice training. I am concerned about how we’re going to effectively and reasonably provide in-service opportunities so that we don’t end up with a two-tiered system for a number of years composed of those who have formal training in technology use and those who don’t.

The major challenges are primarily institutional. The biggest of these is overcoming inertia - even in current preservice settings we find many programs that have been churning out language teachers for years without providing formal CALL training, and they have so far had little incentive to change. Two things that can provide that incentive are the job market, when candidates without CALL training are clearly shown to be at a disadvantage compared to those who have it, and the promulgation of
clear and achievable technology standards for teachers by government bodies or professional organizations. There are a number of other challenges that need to be overcome: ignorance, that is, convincing department chairs and other program administrators that CALL is here to stay; insufficient time given the already full schedules in many programs; and insufficient technological infrastructure, both accessible hardware and software (some institutions have facilities but they are dedicated to other groups) and the human support necessary to maintain it. There is also the problem of a lack of established methodology for doing this sort of training, although recent publications show we’re making some headway there. Finally, we have the rather serious obstacle of a lack of sufficiently trained and appropriately compensated CALL trainers. All of these can be overcome, but it is likely to take a combination of efforts of government bodies, professional organizations, and leading educational institutions to achieve. I hope that members of the Learning Technologies SIG continue to take a prominent role in such efforts.

Editor: What’s next for you in terms of your research? Which conferences do you plan to attend in the coming year? Which would you recommend and why?

Hubbard: Some of my recent research has actually focused on research. I have written elsewhere that most CALL research looks at what learners do without training when they’re trying a CALL task or application for the first time. I’d really like to see more work done on trained or experienced users. To that end, I am also planning to continue my own work on learner training for listening with colleagues here at Stanford.

I’m currently hoping to attend seven conferences in 2008 and five are outside the US: CALICO in March, TESOL in April, JALT CALL in June, WorldCALL in August, and a series of back-to-back conferences in Europe in late August to early September: AILA, CALL Antwerp, and EuroCALL. I wish I had the time and funding to attend a few others, such as those sponsored by the Learning Technologies SIG and PacCALL.

Each of these offers a different perspective and though there is some overlap in participants, each provides a different range of experiences. This will be my first experience with AILA and JALTCALL so I know less what to expect. CALICO welcomes both research and practice presentations and is joining IALLT (International Association of Language Learning Technologies) for its conference in San Francisco. CALL Antwerp is small and more exclusively research-focused than the other conferences. I like EuroCALL for its variety of presentations, distinguishing research papers, research and development papers, and reflective practice papers. TESOL always has a strong CALL strand and will be in New York, perhaps a more appealing and accessible venue for those in Europe. The one conference I’d recommend most though is WorldCALL since it has a true international scope and only comes around once every five years.

Editor: Looking back over your career to date, what has been the professional highlight and the most satisfying element you have encountered as a university educator?

Hubbard: In terms of the most satisfying element as a university educator, I’d have to say it’s the opportunity I have once a year to teach a course, or more accurately a “mini course”, in CALL through the Linguistics Department.
here. I started this about 10 years ago and organizing it motivates me to get my own thoughts together and to update them every year. Professionally, I’d say there are two experiences that have stood out. One was a survey of unanswered questions in CALL research I conducted in 2002 and the other was the 2006 volume Teacher Education in CALL that Mike Levy and I co-edited. In both cases what was most compelling was the opportunity to work with a number of colleagues from all over the world, many of whom I had never met in person. For all the diversity of views and even occasional disagreement in the field, there is a sense of shared purpose that came through in these experiences that I find very comforting.

Editor: Thank you for agreeing to this interview with CALL Review.

Hubbard: It’s been my great pleasure, Michael.

Digital Audio for Language Learning

Most of you will have heard of podcasting, many of you will have an mp3 (or even mp4) player, or at least know someone who has got one; some of you will know what a pod-catcher is. But how many of you have wanted to learn how to make digital audio, but were afraid to ask? How many of you have wondered how best to make use of such materials in language learning? This workshop will start by looking at and considering existing digital audio. It will then explore the nuts and bolts of creating digital audio: recording and editing and then consider ways that it can be used to support language learning, how it can be uploaded to websites, blogs, or Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and used in conjunction with tasks to promote and develop effective listening.

It will consider how your learners can be involved and what you might learn from them. This will be a very practically-oriented day and you will go away with core skills that you can make use of back in your teaching contexts.

Further details are available from: <http://ltsig.org.uk/>
This article examines, in terms of intercultural communication and foreign language education, whether or not online education and constructivism can be congruent with Japanese learning styles, and how far a globalized classroom could be realized in Japan.

While summarizing some findings in articles and book chapters by the author on educational technology, this brief article gives more emphasis to the cultural issues involved in global online education.

Komiyama researched online Japanese learning styles for a course at the University of British Columbia. Her review of the literature drew heavily upon the online library of this author (URL before the References below), and this article in turn draws upon her unpublished work. In a knowledge-based society, foreign language ability is recognized as necessary for the nation’s economic success. Yet English education remains mired in a grammar-translation pedagogical tradition reinforced by paper exams. Moreover, self-expression itself, even in Japanese, has found scant space in the curriculum. This is an other-oriented culture that emphasizes social harmony through self-abnegation and acquiescence, at least on the surface in face relationships. Thus obstacles to cross-cultural communication abound, but McCarty (2006) finds evidence that the cultural differences or psychological distance can be surmounted.

Komiyama investigated learning styles, which differ according to cultures as well as individuals. Knowing how the peer-group orientation of the Japanese generally shapes their learning behavior could help match teaching styles to learning styles. Japanese people have tended to sacrifice their own interests and show loyalty in exchange for the protection of a group. They are generally judged categorically in terms of their role or relations in a group more than on their individual qualities, which makes the objective evaluation of student work and class participation difficult. Not questioning the teacher even when not understanding or not agreeing actually indicates respect, yet it could easily be misunderstood as passivity or worse.

While in individualistic Western cultures an ‘I-You’ stance shows mutual respect and equal status, Asian cultures tend to be hierarchical based on age, sex and social status as determiners of appropriate behavior. In East Asia and Southeast Asia, a ‘We-They’ stance became the societal norm perhaps because of a collective agricultural tradition owing to the demands of rice cultivation. For a fuller analysis of the cultural differences, cf. McCarty (2003). Such people may not be comfortable expressing their opinions in classrooms, because they understand public statements as representing their group or culture. They tend to be concerned about maintaining the approval of their group, which does not correspond at all to how good the opinions may be to the teacher. In Japan peer groups of all ages are raucous, while the same individuals are reserved with people of different status, including teachers. Thus stereotypes as well as appearances deceive.

Chinese people reportedly rely more on visual cues in a social context to communicate with others. As Japanese people are also sensitive to context, virtual learning environments can present a particular challenge to these
A number of cultural attitudes have inhibited the evolution of online learning, such as a tradition-bound institutional culture of instruction, and elaborate face-to-face rituals essential to everyday communication. For more on the above points, cf. McCarty (2005).

Nonetheless, in February 2004 the author set out to challenge the limits of Japanese learning styles in an intensive course on Online Education in Theory and Practice at the national University of Tsukuba Graduate School of Education. The graduate students were majoring in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy.

Colleagues in the World Association for Online Education in four other countries agreed to serve as mentors during the week and particularly at certain times for live chats and audioconferences. Since Japanese culture privileges face relationships and solidarity rituals, a fully hybrid approach was most suitable, utilizing a classroom with the instructor there throughout the course, plus a constant Internet connection for each student and opportunities for authentic interaction with informants at a distance.

Students’ testimonies supported hypotheses in McCarty (2006) that 1) the learning, including new technical skills, was transformative and empowering, 2) a constructivist approach was readily accepted culturally, 3) the course constituted a positive form of globalization, and 4) a globalized classroom was realized.

While highly globalized countries such as Singapore are influenced by foreign ways in return for economic benefits, Japan has managed to remain one of the largest beneficiaries of globalization without most of its citizens engaging in intercultural communication or adjusting their collective practices to international norms. The reciprocity that binds Japanese to one another is evidently out of its compartment when non-Japanese are involved. Defining themselves by contrast with foreign cultures reinforces the group solidarity of insiders, but it causes friction with outsiders. Cultural contrasts reassure them of their unique ethnic identity, excusing them from emulating other cultures or mastering foreign languages to bridge the gap.

Yet the upshot of the above observations is that Japanese culture is not threatened by anything a visiting lecturer could say or do. Then what would it indicate if no friction occurred when a lecturer opened the classroom to the world, communicated bilingually but mostly in English unlike other courses, and introduced one new concept or technology after another in a decidedly constructivist manner? Could learners have been chafing at some aspects of their own country’s educational system, being taught about English in Japanese by professors who were distant or remote not technologically but hierarchically in terms of social distance? Could the different approach along with the new technologies be embraced by learners as a breath of fresh air, agreeable to their own aspirations? The palpable enthusiasm in student testimonies called for considerable depth of explanation.

Constructivist, student-centered learning, facilitated in a somewhat Socratic manner of promoting discovery by the students, was practiced in a moderate form, particularly in view of the expectations of non-Western students for clear and continuous guidance from a teacher who is present and supportive. The stronger the version of constructivism, the more exceptional the assumed roles of teachers and
students are from a global viewpoint, which should be the default context. Most institutional cultures in Africa, the Mideast, Russia, Asia and elsewhere tend to be more instructivist, teacher-centered and authoritarian than Western countries, which establishes the expectations of students toward any teacher. The universality of constructivist approaches remains to be tested across cultures as to whether or not it actually enhances learning in practice.

The Tsukuba graduate course was designed to have the students learn experientially by doing, and to brainstorm toward their own conclusions, even at the risk of their not fully grasping every concept to which they were exposed. Socially constructed knowledge through peer collaboration is quite natural to Japanese learners from elementary school before the education race gets more competitively individualized, which may partly explain why the graduate students readily embraced this approach. The Japanese educational system includes both approaches to teaching: instructivism when the achievement is graded, and constructivism, with an affinity to group project work, when the learning goals involve socialization. By comparison, researchers in Thailand who surveyed virtual education with intercultural communication methodology arrived at results reminiscent in most ways of Japanese culture with respect to English education. But student-centered constructivism faced more obstacles in Thai culture. There were barriers to online knowledge sharing in terms of high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism (Burn & Thongprasert, 2005).

It seems counter-intuitive at first that most Japanese people, known for employing ambiguity, would also rate highly in uncertainty avoidance. But in all-important relationships, like the Thais, they need to know where they stand in the group and what is expected of them. Ambiguity, often used to gain maneuvering room, is a defense that at the same time threatens others with uncertainty. Thus students need very specific guidance and usually do not appreciate open-ended classwork.

The Thais at this stage evidently maintain a more purely non-Western way of thinking than the Japanese because of less exposure to Western influences. While the Japanese have tried to retain their traditional culture, in their modernization drive since the 19th Century they have not wanted to miss any technologies or methods that might help them compete with the West. Since the Western artifacts and ways they adopted could not be completely decontextualized from their cultural background, it could be observed that the Japanese have inadvertently become bicultural to an extent. In this sense, the unsung heroes of positive globalization include millions of Asians who are acquiring a second language and, voluntarily or otherwise, becoming East-West biculturals to some degree in the process. The Tsukuba graduate students reported “an extremely frank atmosphere” and “fun”: both rarities in formal gatherings in Japan including the classroom, but common among friends or peers, so the students seemed to welcome a liberating element in contacting the outside world or an instructor from a Western culture. Students characterized their regular professors as remote, so there is a certain social distance that cannot be bridged for all the proximity in the f2f classroom. Evidently online and intercultural communication are not subject to those inhibitions.

In foreign language learning there are target languages and cultures that students wish to learn about, contact, and
add to their own repertoire of language use and cultural identity. The Tsukuba graduate students' stated desires included discussions with native speakers of English, in this case American and British ones. It left little to be desired as English discussion practice precisely because the students were focused on the content and people rather than on the language.

Constructivism was found to contribute to positive learning outcomes as reported by the graduate students, because they readily welcomed the approach. Students also noticed and welcomed the frank atmosphere. If they could laugh and be open with the instructor, quite unlike the usual class in Japan, it provides evidence of universality in how the lowering of inhibitions fosters optimal learning. The atmosphere transformed the first day, but not into something alien to the students. Cooperative learning, value clarification, and enjoyable experiences are hallmarks of Japanese education before examination pressures mount in secondary schools. So a moderately constructivist approach in this case could be considered to have fostered transformative learning and empowerment across cultures.

In conclusion, a globalized classroom is open to the world, connected to the global network, involving learners or peers, teachers or mentors, from different cultures in communication, whether f2f or at a distance. The classroom, usually monocultural, sealed, and seldom observed by outsiders in the case of Japan, is opened to the world in terms of both global resources and contacts with people of other cultures. For evidence of the foregoing conclusions, cf. McCarty (2006). Many related papers are available online at the Bilingualism and Japanology Intersection: <http://www.waoe.org/steve/epublist.html>.

References


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Aberdeen to Exeter - Taking the IATEFL Conference Online
Julian Wing & Gavin Dudeney

"Those were days of intense online activity, reflection, discussion and socialisation with people from all over the world."
Aberdeen Online Participant

“It was one of the most amazing and rewarding online experiences I’ve ever had.”
Aberdeen Online Participant

Planning for ‘Aberdeen Online’ began in January 2007. Partners IATEFL and the British Council had three months to form a team, design an event website, gather content, resources and equipment and work with Aberdeen conference presenters, who were invited to be part of this initiative.

The objective of Aberdeen Online was to provide teacher audiences worldwide with a ‘flavour’ of the 2007 IATEFL Conference - so what did we achieve?

Three months seems like an adequate length of time but the planning involved making sure we had the IT infrastructure in place at the venue and the right people at the event who would be able to work under pressure to produce and publish web content that would keep our remote audiences engaged. This represented both a challenge and a unique opportunity to take a ‘taste’ of the Aberdeen conference to isolated teacher audiences around the world. We wanted to provide an online experience – an opportunity to give teachers a sense of ‘almost being there’.

The Aberdeen Online web coverage included 17 ‘almost live’ or ‘on-demand’ streamed video presentations together with presentation slides, handouts, 60 video/audio interviews with presenters and delegates, over 20 moderated discussion forums, daily reports and a photo album with over 200 images. We launched a Moodle website <http://community.britishcouncil.org/iatefl> a week prior to the convention which hosted all the event content and certain content was also mirrored on EduNation in Second Life <http://www.secondlife.com>.

Our selection of which sessions to video was done blind, through a double survey on British Council websites, allowing the potential audience to choose what they wanted to see. In the first round of voting, during which over 1,700 people cast their vote, people were given the choice of broad subject areas within the conference programme (e.g. Business English, Learning Technologies) to choose from. Each person had to identify the area they in which would most benefit from a day of training.

Once we had the top four subject areas chosen, we went through the programme identifying key themes covered in each. These were then posted to a second survey, inviting people to choose one of the areas from the first vote (e.g. Learning Technologies) and choose four key themes from that area to plan their perfect day of training. Once the second vote had come in, we were able to identify the talks which would be of most interest.

All the video files were streamed via DatMedia Player in Windows Media Player format together with powerpoint slides and we also offered streaming video in Flash. The audio interviews were offered as downloadable MP3 files.
In addition to the text and video material, 15 volunteer ‘remote’ forum moderators were recruited. Those that volunteered were sent moderators’ guide. More than 2,500 messages were posted to the Aberdeen Online forums; this was a testament to the skill and dedication of the forum moderators.

So who did we reach?
We had 2,544 users from 116 countries from Afghanistan to Yemen. The most active forum (unsurprisingly) was the Learning Technologies one. The total traffic for the site was somewhere in the region of 20GB transferred.

Lessons Learned?
It was always going to be a challenge to give our remote audience members the impression that they were in some way ‘involved’ in the physical event. The vast majority of those taking part in Aberdeen Online forum discussions were not physically present in Aberdeen and were therefore reliant on our coverage to find out what the ‘hot topics’ were. The challenge, therefore, was to report ‘significant issues’ via video, audio and text reports and encourage the remote audience to interact and respond. Ideally, responses from our remote audience should have been fed in to sessions in Aberdeen and create a response from presenters and the physical audience.

Access to Media Files
We were aware that the configuration of peoples’ machines and their choice of browser could affect access to the media files we were publishing. We weren’t aware, however, until we arrived in Aberdeen, that we would need to offer individual support to a small but significant number of people who were experiencing problems in gaining access to the media files. Satisfying such a large and diverse audience required a great deal of flexibility.

We cannot be sure what percentage of our audience experienced problems. Some users were clearly less confident with IT, others users maybe lacked patience in waiting for the files to download. In the Aberdeen Online forums members of the community were reporting bugs and errors and providing each other with solutions. This gave the team a chance to assess the issues people were facing and look into providing solutions. There was a great collaborative spirit in the forum as people from all over the world provided advice and shared tips.

Out of an audience of 2,500 we received approximately 30 messages from users who reported ‘issues’ regarding access to the media files. Our first response was to offer the video files in a flash format. Flash is considered as the most accessible media format, however, those accessing the flash versions did not have the opportunity to view the presenters’ PowerPoint slides in the same browser.

Email Digests
A number of participants were not prepared for the amount of email the forum alerts generated. The default settings, with hindsight, could have been set differently. Some of those who registered when activity was reaching a peak contacted us to voice their concerns. In response, we posted announcements in the forums advising users to re-set their digest settings.

Feedback
We were keen to ask our remote audience for their feedback. In June, two months after the Aberdeen conference, we sent out a brief online survey to everyone who registered for Aberdeen Online. A high percentage of
those who responded felt that their online experience had been rewarding – this was very encouraging. Here is a sample for the feedback we received:

“Dear organizers, It was a great experience for me to get into such a wonderful interaction with EFL teachers and educators from different parts of our small world. Since this is my first experience with a British council online forum, I appreciated the idea and I do encourage you to continue bringing teachers together under the umbrella of British Council learning.” (Aberdeen Online Participant)

“Firstly I would like to say a HUGE thank you to everyone involved for making his available. The things I really appreciated most was the video of the presentations + slides. Didn’t find the little mini video interviews so interesting and the audio never attracted me because it was harder to make out, but the video presentations with slides were terrific. I also appreciated the blogs of the roving reporters. Fantastic job all round, and once again.” (Aberdeen Online Participant)

“Firstly, almost all TAs I have spoken to were really positive about the idea as they feel it will definitely mean that a wider number of members who could not otherwise come to conference will share the conference experience. As that was the aim, it would seem their comments confirm that this has been met successfully. So congratulation to all involved!” Sara Hannam – IATEFL Associates’ Coordinator.

“Congratulations on the IATEFL site - looks fantastic and is definitely a major step in the way conferences will be done in future.” John Corbett Professor of Applied Language Studies, University of Glasgow

What next? Plans for Exeter Online
Aberdeen Online reached an impressive number of teachers around the world. However, the audience was a fraction of the potential global audience.

We plan to launch a CD containing materials from Aberdeen and also tips on ways to work with material recorded at Exeter. We would like to provide support to teacher networks who could hold local development events and workshops making use of Exeter materials. As well as the Exeter Online website, we’ll also be launching an Exeter Online blog. This will help us to keep people updated on developments and provide us with an opportunity to collaborate in the months leading up to the IATEFL Exeter conference.

Any Ideas?
We are aware that there are aspects of our Aberdeen coverage that we didn’t get right. If you have any suggestions as to how we could improve on Aberdeen, we would like to hear from you.

Please contact the following for more information:
<julian.wing@britishcouncil.org> or <gavin.dudeney@theconsultants-e.com>

Gavin Dudeney is Project Director with the Consultants-E.com and Julian Wing works for the British Council in Brazil.
When it Comes to e-Learning are You in a Muddle or a Moodle?
John Eldridge and Steve Neufeld

Introduction
Until recently, Computer Assisted Language Learning was often restricted to the realm of the lab, with time and place dictated not according to the needs of learners and teachers, but at the convenience of the institution and syllabus. However, the advent of the Internet and the growing sophistication of both learners and teachers have seen a paradigm shift away from behaviourist and communicative CALL to a more seamlessly integrated CALL (Warschauer, 1996). The once revolutionary gap-fill activities of first generation ELT software has given way to ever-changing approaches that struggle to keep pace with the needs and demands of each new generation. Today, we are accustomed not only to multimedia graphics and streaming video but also the user-defined and interactive world of blogs, wikis, YouTube, and most recently Second Life. We are approaching the threshold of ‘normalization’ (Davies, 2007) in which the speed of adoption of the new into the normal is measured in weeks or even days. Like the mobile phone, e-learning is becoming part and parcel of the everyday, humdrum life of a student. Teachers unable to move their pedagogy into this medium will soon appear as antiquated as those who clung to their Gestetner machines in defiance of the photocopier, and their pigeon-holes in defiance of e-mail.

However, whilst it is clear that today’s tools offer an infinite number of learning resources, it is less clear how best to harness this potential within the finite constraints of traditional learning programmes. Indeed as far back as 1991, Garret pointed out that ‘the use of the computer does not constitute a method’. Rather, it is a ‘medium in which a variety of methods, approaches, and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented’ (Warschauer, 1996). Meanwhile, the ease and availability of technology together with its extraordinary speed of development have ushered in an era of experimentation that is both fascinating and bewildering, not least because very often there seems to be no obvious methodological or pedagogical underpinning of the use of the medium. In this article, some of these issues will be explored with particular reference to ways of managing e-learning in a platform known as Moodle.

The World of MOODLE
There are many e-learning platforms to choose from, and any teacher anywhere in the world can access a plethora of free services to use with their classes. Creating ‘groups’, such as Yahoo Groups or Google Groups, is an easy way to provide a cyber platform for a class. Other free platforms, such as NiceNet, offer similar facilities to share information, maintain mailing lists, and hold discussions. YouTube offers imaginative teachers a technology in which students can record and publish presentations, role plays, or video journals. Who could have imagined a few years ago that students could make their own ‘movies’ using mobile phones and that within seconds, their videos could be available for anyone in the world to see? Added to this trend is the growth of the open source initiative. Open source software is available for
anyone to use, and unlike commercial software is open for anyone to adapt and improve. This community-based model is dramatically changing the face of computing. It has enabled the ordinary user to focus on content and service and simply add-on the appropriate design and interface to taste.

MOODLE is an example of an open source learner management system that enables teachers to design courses in an interactive online environment. What distinguishes MOODLE most from its commercial rivals (Munoz & Duzer, 2005) are its underlying pedagogical principles, namely constructivism, constructionism and social constructivism. The result is particularly sympathetic to foreign language methodology and pedagogy, with a natural fit to building a community of learners. Like other e-learning platforms, input can be delivered in a number of modes, such as ‘lesson’ or ‘workshop’ or through locally designed materials or links to the world-wide web. Students meanwhile can upload assignments directly into the site, participate in discussions or live chat, maintain blogs, contribute to class wikis, send messages, and ask questions. The system tracks and logs student participation, and survey and questionnaire tools allow for built-in evaluation by the instructor, as well as student-centred reflective tasks based on individual e-journals.

This is merely a glimpse of what is effectively a virtual learning community. The system can deal easily with mechanical activities such as gap-fill, matching, and ordering, or at the other end of the continuum promote unstructured activity in which students have maximum room for choice in how they approach their learning. This in turn puts important decisions in the hands of course and curriculum designers as to how best to exploit this powerful technology, especially in pushing the envelope beyond what can normally be accomplished in a traditional classroom setting.

**Autonomy and Learning**

Although the concept of autonomy often leaps to the foreground when such technologies are discussed, some definitional care is required. Autonomy is not an automatic product of e-learning and the dilemmas faced in terms of how far learning is administratively dictated, teacher driven or learner generated are just as real in the virtual world of e-learning as they are in the traditional classroom. Institutions need first to consider the autonomy paradigm carefully, for the introduction of MOODLE into a curriculum is best-founded on clear institutional principles and objectives.

MOODLE employs intricate levels of hierarchy that embody themselves in user privileges. These privileges range from a fixed, static mode with the authority for change in the hands of an expert minority, to an entirely liberal mode in which teachers, and their students if they so wish, have complete freedom to shape, run, and contribute to courses as they see fit. The possible settings are many and varied. While the software offers immense potential in terms of encouraging autonomy, it needs only the manipulation of a few settings to kill any notion of autonomy stone-dead. Depriving teachers of autonomy ensures that learners most likely do not experience it either. Compulsory class hours in which students are made to sit in front of a computer and complete a series of pre-defined tasks may or may not be well-spent, but they do not contribute much to the development of autonomy, and in the case of MOODLE, in a very real sense constitute something of a failure to exploit the software to maximum effect.
The issues of autonomy and individualisation are closely linked. Whilst a beginners' class, for example, may be comprised of students at a similar level with similar needs, many language classes actually include a wide range of students at different levels and with different needs. An instructor's ability to cope with this diversity is constrained by class size, number of hours available, the nature of the course, etc. E-learning platforms offer a powerful mechanism for dealing with these problems, simply because choices and pathways can be built into individualised learner-driven systems. In addition to individualisation, much has been written over the years about collaborative learning. One of the most encouraging features of MOODLE is that the learning environment it delivers to its users provides them with tools to engage peers not only in defined classes or groups but also across classes and even institutions, locally and internationally. Students can define their own discussions, ask questions of each other and to a large extent work their way through a programme almost entirely autonomously or as a member of a fully collaborating community.

Models of e-learning integration

There are then a number of overlapping ways then in which learning systems such as MOODLE can be introduced into educational programmes. E-learning can augment or replace elements of the classroom programme in various degrees, blending traditional face-to-face environments with e-learning platforms as programmes which function with or as:

i) an optional self-access add-on.
ii) a compulsory self-access add-on.
iii) a replacement for a given proportion of traditional classroom activities.
iv) an extension of the classroom.
v) pure distance-learning.

All of this adds up to a lot of choice, and to appreciate the application, it is worth looking at two case studies.

The MOODLE experience in practice

**EMU**

In the 2006-2007 academic year, the Modern Languages Division of the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, Cyprus piloted MOODLE in freshmen language programmes in select classes in which two out of four formal class hours were removed, and a MOODLE programme offered in their stead. The two formal classroom hours tended to be devoted more to counselling and orientation than formal ‘teaching’ so to a large degree students were left to manage their own learning and make their own choices about exactly what they studied, and how and when they went about it. Discussion and chat replaced group-work; class announcements were replaced by news forums and questions transmitted through the message service; e-assignments were uploaded, and paper-based assignments abolished; on-line lessons, wikis, vocabulary glossaries and the like served as the bases of pedagogical input. It is not the intention to exhaustively analyse all aspects of this experience here, but rather highlight a few key points:

i) Students in MOODLE classes were assessed in exactly the same way, taking exactly the same exams as students in traditional classes. Their performance matched or exceeded their peers.

ii) The rate of return to semester two of the pilot scheme was very high. Students appreciated the freedom that
MOODLE offered, whilst recognising in feedback that the key to success was learner responsibility.

iii) Students felt that the interactive nature of the MOODLE meant that they had if anything more contact with their instructors than in the traditional classroom.

iv) They pointed to the advantage of being able to study at their own pace, going over work they did not understand and repeating it, and getting answers to questions whenever they asked. In other words, they identified the highly fluid and dynamic nature of the traditional classroom as something disadvantageous, stating that it was often difficult to take any action in class if something was not understood in the heat of the moment, that it was often difficult to concentrate, etc. MOODLE time was seen as being time efficiently spent.

v) Students started to engage with peers in other classes, and there were instances of students from other institutions and countries taking advantage of courses and discussions. Traditional boundaries started to break down.

vi) The language of the learning community was entirely English, even though many participants shared the same L1. Unlike traditional classes, where the language is almost permanently negotiated, in MOODLE the issue simply never arose; from the beginning it was implicitly accepted that it was an English speaking community.

vii) Students started to take the initiative, for example by initiating and continuing discussions on their own interests, and by answering questions themselves that had been directed by others at the teacher. Along with this peer collaboration came the most essential and valuable ingredient of the experiment – the creation of a genuine learning community.

**Middle East Technical University**

The School of Foreign Languages, METU, Cyprus Campus, opened its doors to students in 2005. The English Preparatory School follows the exact same syllabus, class hours, and assessment procedures as its sister school on the main METU campus in Ankara. Most students enter at the Beginner level, taking courses which run 6 hours every day, Monday to Friday.

Students in METU have limited opportunity to exercise learner autonomy. They cannot take full advantage of the services offered in the Self-Access Centre, as it is only open during normal teaching hours, and occasionally at weekends just before tests. Furthermore, teachers have limited opportunity to exercise autonomy in their struggle to keep up with a lock-step syllabus whose pace is set and administered from the METU Ankara campus. As a result teachers, together with their students, are 'captive to the system' during class hours. 'Pop quizzes', administered at the exact same time as in Ankara, make it impossible for teachers to take students to the computer labs. And, after six hours of intensive language study in class, students need a break. Typically, they would only be ready to engage in meaningful language study in the early to late evening. The MOODLE offers a way to supplement the preparatory school courses in a way that conventional methods cannot. Presented with the option to engage in activities online that encouraged them to use and practice the English they were learning in class, students would allocate time outside the normal chatting, downloading, and game-playing to take part in the MOODLE. Because the MOODLE tracks user
activity, it was also easy for teachers to assess MOODLE participation as part of the overall participation grade assigned to students. Some of the activities used to supplement the course work were as follows:

i) A number of discussion forums were initiated by the instructors based on themes introduced in class. Students were also given an 'open' forum to put forward any topics of discussion. This proved to be one of the most popular forums in the MOODLE, and as noted above in the EMU example, even though the students shared the same L1, all of the interaction that took place was in English. In fact, students in one class organized a class 'picnic' at the weekend, employing GOOGLE Earth to choose a location by the sea and use the subsequent image as a map. Time, location, assigned responsibilities were all done via the MOODLE and in English.

ii) Modern society is moving towards one in which printed media is taking a distant second place to multi-media. The colourful pictures in the text book, the whiteboard, audio, the OHP (and at times even the teacher!) are viewed as 'archaic' by the generation that has grown up with interactive TV, the mobile phone and social networking via avatars on the Internet. The Internet presents the user with a vast array of multi-media resources which can be seamlessly integrated into structured MOODLE activities. For example, a unit on sports led to a discussion forum about bungee jumping – with a YouTube video of an actual jump to help 'feel' the experience.

iii) MOODLE incorporates a journal, typically set up for students to respond to a task in which they reflect on aspects of their learning process. Only the student and the teacher can view the entries, and any response. While offering little difference to a paper-based journal, the electronic version is easier to monitor and process than dealing with paper-based journals.

iv) In MOODLE, a wiki can be used for collaborative projects, as well as individual blogs for each student. Both were attempted, but with limited success. For all their apparent sophistication, many students have a surprisingly narrow range of digital literacy, limited to downloading MP3s, uploading photos, chatting and occasionally sending e-mail. Most, in fact, do not even know how to use a spell-checker in the word processor. Despite its ease of use, the concept of a shared collaborative workspace in a wiki, in which any and all can edit or add content, was even more foreign than the target language of English. Likewise, using blogs as a tool to reflect on one's own learning requires a level of motivation and self-awareness which few students had been allowed to develop in the traditional educational framework.

v) Hot Potatoes, the brilliant software that gives teachers the power to create interactive web pages and quizzes, integrates seamlessly into the MOODLE, allowing for quizzes to be monitored and assessed within the MOODLE database. Full HTML compatibility ensures that any multi-media incorporated into a Hot Potatoes activity, such as a streamed video, will work within the MOODLE. What is more, once in the MOODLE, these activities become easy to import and export into other courses, allowing teachers to pool their efforts in a way not possible with paper-based media. If teachers already have an archive of Hot Potato activities, the MOODLE is an ideal repository for them.
vi) An added benefit of using the MOODLE is that all the learner interaction in text form is easily available to use on an individual, class or school basis to form learner corpora that can be analyzed and used as a research or teaching tool.

Conclusion
Are the days of the traditional classroom and lockstep learning programme numbered?! Probably not, but even the Gestenerphiles of yesteryear eventually had to succumb to the photocopier. Paradigm shifts in the application of new technological developments will only increase as Davies' threshold of 'normalization' becomes more fluid and in tune with the ever-increasing speed of technological innovation. The promise of the underlying pedagogical principles in terms of the learner as an individual and the teacher as a guide may actually see the light of day or should we say the light of a computer monitor. The future is definitely moving towards a vision of education ironically more in keeping with the principles embodied by the likes of Plato and Aristotle, more dynamic and more geared to individual needs than anything likely to emerge from today's traditional classroom and exam-oriented, assessment-obsessed syllabi. However, it is not the technology that will make this reality - the corollary to Garrett's astute comment over 15 years ago that the computer is not a method but a medium is that it is the teacher's creativity and ability to apply basic pedagogical principles through the medium that will herald a brand new day. Like all technology, the MOODLE, in itself, is not that revolutionary. What teachers do with it, given the autonomy to let them follow their creativity within solid pedagogical principles, can be.

About the authors
This article is based on the contents of a presentation given by John and Steve at the METU Cyprus Campus Workshop Festival in June 2007.

John Eldridge currently works in the General Education Department at Eastern Mediterranean University. Steve Neufeld is now a freelance consultant and researcher.

John and Steve are currently collaborating on a series of Electronic Readers with a lexical and data-driven emphasis to be delivered through their MOODLE site. If you want more information about these readers or help and assistance in using MOODLE with your students, please contact Steve or John at: <eReader@telcas.org>

References


EUROCALL 2007: A Conference Report

C. K. Jung

This year’s EUROCALL International Conference in Coleraine, Northern Ireland was a busy one as regards the use of multimedia technologies, with their accompanying issues of pedagogy. The conference focused on “Mastering Multimedia: Teaching Languages Through Technology” to maximise the effect of using Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the classroom. Over 150 plenary, panel, poster, parallel sessions were carefully selected by the committee and they were presented during the three-day conference and 1-day pre-conference workshops. Plenary speakers were well-known scholars including Professor Bernd Ruschoff, Professor Grainne Conole, and Professor Uschi Felix.

Day 1: Wednesday, 5th September

Arrival (George Best Belfast City Airport)

Although some people including myself complained about relatively high conference registration fee, I must admit that the conference was truly well-prepared. There was a EUROCALL information desk in Belfast City Airport arrivals area, staffed by conference assistants. They helped delegates with travel arrangements i.e. grouping delegates for taxi sharing to the conference venue. I was very impressed with the warmth of the hospitality and the welcome provided turned out to be an excellent opportunity to meet other conference participants. In my case, I met two academics who became my close friends during the conference period.
Pre-Conferences
Sarah Guth and Lisa Griggio from the University of Padua in Italy ran a useful workshop introducing a wide range of free Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, Flickr, Del.icio.us, YouTube, and so on. Except for one or two tools, most applications they presented were reasonably familiar to me but they successfully demonstrated how open social software could offer effective learning curves to students thereby motivating much broader personal and academic experiences. It was very interesting to see one of the projects they undertook with native Italian students and Australian students who collaborated creating their own wikis in real-world contexts.

Show & Tell Exhibitions
Two hours of Show and Tell presentations were a somewhat unfamiliar format for me. Basically they were in four half-hour sessions in carousel format i.e. conference participants could circulate from one session to the other freely. Also posters were presented in the same place throughout the conference. Exhibitors’ and sponsors’ stands were displayed with posters in the same place throughout the conference so conference members could have enough time to read and talk with poster presenters and exhibitors while they were taking a break. I attended one of the Show and Tell presentations by Haruo Nishino from Doshisha University in Japan. He talked about using Moodle for his English classes. Nishino encountered several problems when running his English classes using Moodle. He concluded that it was critical that both teachers and students should be willing to dedicate themselves to the construction of learning communities for a better language learning process. One of out of the ordinary but understandable thing I remembered from his presentation was that he had to teach the use of a computer keyboard to his students before starting his class. This was because of the students’ lack of computer skills. Young students are now more familiar with their mobile phones so they are good at texting with their fingers but not with a computer keyboard.

Poster Sessions & Cocktail Reception
The EUROCALL conference committee organised the poster sessions very efficiently. They ran these sessions in parallel with the welcome cocktail reception so conference participants could chat, eat, and view the posters. There were two reasons why I decided to present my poster at EUROCALL 2007. One of them was that I wanted to feel that I was a part of this large international community of dynamic people who are teaching language using technologies. The other was that I wanted to have the experience of presenting an academic research poster. This was because I have been writing a book on academic writing for Koreans and an academic poster is a part of the book. I found the poster session was more useful than a paper session would have been. I could talk with one person but sometimes with several people at the same time. Also it was very useful to make personal contact with people who were interested in my work. I had never presented a poster in an international conference like this. I met and talked with many people while I was presenting and learned many things plus some practical tips e.g. how to present my poster in 30 seconds, the best approach to delegates who showed some interest in my research, and so on. Obviously I would like to share what I learned from my poster presentation and help students prepare for their posters.
Day 2: Thursday, 6th September, Registration, Opening Ceremony, and the First Keynote

It was my first time to attend the EUROCALL International Conference. Obviously I was a little nervous when I met new people but I had to change my strategy and overcome this. I just needed to be more socialable and enjoy the conference. Following Professor Richard Barnett’s (Vice-Chancellor, University of Ulster) and Professor John Gillespie (EUROCALL Committee Chair, University of Ulster) welcome addresses, Professor Bernd Rueschoff from University of Duisburg-Essen raised questions about Web 2.0 and language learning, teaching and research. He highlighted current issues related to technology enhanced language learning and introduced real examples that had been used in the classroom. I just had to agree with him when he emphasised the importance of students’ active engagement in order to create ‘comprehensible output’. Fortunately I had a chance to ask him what Web 3.0 means during the Q&A session at the end of his keynote speech.

CK Jung: “You have mentioned Web 3.0 during your presentation. What is it?”

Bernd Rueschoff: “Yeah, what is Web 2.0? Now the idea is that the title page I copied from a German magazine that deals with, obviously, web selling. I mean, the term Web 2.0 is as well. It’s a business term. I mean…they generated to sort of give the web some kind of new push in business terms. But when I read through that particular publication there were a couple of things mentioned by those trying to obviously use the Web 2.0 as sort of as … ‘yet again different from what we have available’ as a part of social networking environment on Web 2.0. … I found personally Web 1.0 was initially a business gimmick. They couldn’t call it a New Web because the new economy went down the drain so they didn’t want to call it New Web. Ummm… Web 3.0 is just the same thing. But there are still… there seems to be… whenever, I mean, people in business and people in software sort of use this upgrade kind of levels. They still are aware of the fact that there is something new added to the existing. And I think… that’s… I mean… the buzz words I have just mentioned other ones I’ve been discussing are the next one, a real semantic web, for example.

Parallel Session

Ilse Born-Lechleitner (Johannes Kepler University, Austria) presented an interesting case study where she compared blended learning and traditional classroom learning. The case was based on teaching experiences from her two academic writing courses taught in the summer terms of 2006 and 2007. It appeared that students in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) had to deal with extra technical issues compared to those in the traditional writing class. In addition to the VLE students’ technical challenges, there were administrative problems which occurred e.g. a chatting program within the Moodle site did not work as well as it should have. Consequently blended learning class students had to meet face-to-face to complete their group work in a cafe. Conversely, students in the traditional classroom environment often used a non-verbal way of communicating each other. Although the students in the VLE achieved slightly higher academic results, it appeared that more explicit or precise instructions were critical in running better virtual or blended courses as a preliminary conclusion.
I was fascinated by Born-Lechleitner’s works because I was very interested in the comparative results between blended learning and a traditional classroom environment especially in terms of the teaching and learning of academic writing. I had a chance to ask her a couple of further questions and I realised that one of the issues could be problematic in the EFL contexts in South Korea. Unlike her students who are well over C1 or C2 level in the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), many Korean students’ English proficiency is relatively low. Whether the same approach is going to work in Korea or not is still in question.

Gala Dinner (Royal Court Hotel, Portrush)
I do not know why but I found that Irish music is very similar to Korean traditional music. Those Irish songs I listened to at the Royal Court Hotel in Portrush were truly beautiful. Again I was surrounded by many academics from all over the world and had a really good time talking with them not only on academic issues but also of the personal experiences that have helped me open my eyes to the different academic life in different countries.

Day 3: Friday, 7th September
Parallel Session 1
I met Hsien-Chin Liou (National Tsing Hua University) who talked about utilizing online disciplinary portfolios for the enhancement of an academic writing course in Taiwan. Liou’s research was originally based on Hirvels’ disciplinary portfolios and EAP Writing but she developed Hirvels’ work further applying it to the use of online tools, materials and electronic disciplinary portfolios. Liou established two groups of students: one group consisted of eleven TEFL graduate students who used Moodle as a platform and e-portfolio to produce their final products; and the other group consisted of eight graduate students from a similar academic background who functioned as a control group. A couple of fascinating things emerged while she was presenting. She used an academic concordance, called CARE, which was implanted in Moodle. Also she managed to create a real-time chatting program which was much more advanced than Moodle’s own chatting software. For example, when a student uploaded his or her text other group members could chat and change her text within Moodle. I had seen some people who used Moodle and other external chatting programs but not in quite this way. In addition, she built a small in-house corpus with her students so that they could use it while they were writing the research articles. After her presentation, I took the opportunity to discuss with her the kind of problems she encountered while conducting this research as I wanted to find out if I could conduct similar research in Korea. Having talked with Liou, it seemed to me that strong support from IT Services or the Computer Science Department was crucial to successfully implementing this kind of research. It is interesting to note that most people who applied CALL in their classroom had really good relationship with IT services in their institutes.

EUROCALL Annual General Meeting
I have never before attended an Annual General Meeting (AGM) in any international conferences. Hence I decided to attend this time at EUROCALL. Although there were not many participants compared to the total number of delegates, the EUROCALL AGM ran smoothly and some important administrative issues including reports by members of the Executive Committee and the budget for
the period from 1 July 2007 and 31 June 2008 were discussed. The president of CALICO and representatives from WorldCALL were present.

Parallel Session 2
According to Regine Hampel, The Open University is in the process of implementing an online learning community using Moodle. Probably it is quite obvious that The Open University, which is the UK’s largest university, would be interested in Open Source software since it is free and the University has been using a kind of virtual learning environment for many years. Hampel talked about the usefulness of collective works. She carried out research with 20 students who were on an intensive five-week German course, 100% online. Although there has been a recent proliferation of web-enhanced language learning environments, I was not completely convinced about 100% online learning. Korea National Open University (KNOU) is a national distance learning university in Korea. Since the University was founded in 1972, they offer anyone the opportunity of having lifelong education regardless of time and place. The University teaches via an educational TV channel, radio, and the Internet but crucially both teachers and students still think it is important to meet on a regular basis.

Day 4: Saturday, 8th September
One of interesting things I found from EUROCALL was the cultural mix present in that there were many British, Germans, Spanish, French, Eastern Europeans, and people from Japan. I met Terry Fellner from Saga University in Japan and had breakfast with him. We talked about developing effective academic writing skills and he told me how he has done some work with his Japanese students. Like Korea, Japan also has two separated but not completely different ELT communities: The Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) and The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). The majority of JALT members were foreign English teachers, just like Korea TESOL (KOTESOL) in Korea. I wonder if these kinds of division only exist in Korea and Japan.

Epilogue
It seemed to me that many online language courses were being designed by teachers or curriculum developers believing that the current state of the art and CALL approaches provided effective learning atmospheres. There seems to be little effort made to listen to what students actually say. Not many students have the option of choosing between technology-enhanced language learning environment and traditional face-to-face classrooms. Different strategies should be used with different learners in order to engage them in the co-construction of knowledge. In addition, as technologies often exceeded the teacher’s capability to keep up, technical training and more importantly support for teachers are becoming increasingly important. Governments and schools invest an enormous amount of money in purchasing cutting edge technologies, tools, and software for language teachers and students, but the real outcome of the investment is still not sufficient. The foremost challenge was that teachers who prefer current cultures of professional practice hold back from the use of technology. Similarly, new technologies could be helpful to some learners but are perceived as a hindrance by others. It is important to note that the latest technologies and best practice courseware can only provide better language learning to learners and teaching
to teachers when they are being used properly and efficiently.

C. K. Jung studied and conducted research in the field of Engineering and Technology at the University of Birmingham and the University of Warwick respectively. Now he is reading for an Ed.D. in ELT and Applied Linguistics at the Centre for English Language Teacher Education (CELTE) at Warwick. He is author of *Effective Technical Writing for Korean Scientists and Engineers* (Book Korea) and is interested in CALL to develop effective approaches for teaching L2 writing to university level students in the EFL context in Korea. He can be contacted by e-mail at: <c-k.jung@warwick.ac.uk>.

**Saying Goodbye to the Handbook: A Review of TeacherTrainingVideos.com**

Michael Thomas

Recent articles in *The Guardian* (20th September 2007) as well as presentations at both IATEFL in April 2007 and the *ET Professional* in September 2007 have foregrounded this useful new Internet site that presents videos for teachers and teacher trainers <www.teachertrainingvideos.com>. The author of the site, Russell Stannard, writes a regular column in the *ET Professional* called “Webwatcher”, and the site sprang from a number of readers’ requests from teachers asking about how to do certain things with technology like “How to make a podcast?” “How to create wikis” and “How to set up a blog”. Stannard decided therefore to create a series of learning videos where teachers could learn how to use the technology via short movies produced with screen recording software.

As well as videos that show teachers how to use such popular software as iTunes, Blackboard, and Powerpoint, there is also a collection of videos that demonstrates how to set up popular web 2.0 technologies like Wikis, Podcasts and Blogs. Another section focuses on the best Internet sites for teaching English, and there is also a review of the best ELT podcasts as well as a good overview of some of the best sites for finding video content for using in the EFL classroom. The iTunes videos are especially interesting, as they focus on a number of functions that many ELT practitioners may have overlooked.
The most noteworthy aspect of the videos is that they are hands on, and teachers are able to see a practical demonstration of the learning technologies involved, often in a way that makes the handbook irrelevant. In this respect, the videos provide the ideal medium for training, so for example if you are learning to use Blackboard, you can watch a relevant part of the video, pause and then open up Blackboard and do the same thing yourself. The popularity of the most viewed videos on the site—about using Podomatic and setting up Wikis—benefit from this feature. Another useful set of popular videos is about using search engines, and there are a few tricks that are useful for English teachers to know about.

The site is easy to navigate and user-friendly. Simply click on a subject in the menu on the left hand side of the screen and a set of videos opens on that particular topic. As well as having a section on “General Teaching Videos” that all teachers will find useful (these still tend to be focused on ELT material), there is a specific section for ELT teachers. A recent edition has been a completely new section that deals with multimedia for those teachers that might like to learn to use more advanced software such as Adobe Flash and Director. Videos are currently planned on Moodle, Interactive Whiteboards and Second Life, and Stannard is open to suggestions from readers. The videos are high quality and have been put together using screen capture software that as the name suggests, simultaneously records the presenters voice as well as what is happening at that time on the screen. Stannard uses Camtasia software, currently only available on Windows PCs. In addition to ‘how to’ videos, the technology could also be used to provide student with feedback on essays and assignments.

The most obvious pitfall is the size of the videos. Readers do need a fast computer to download them, and the site cannot be used well with a dial up connection. There are plans to make the videos smaller but access will still be limited to those who have fast internet connections.

The second problem is making sure that everything remains up-to-date. A good example are the videos on using DiscoverySchool, which allows readers to build online quizzes. The site was recently taken down and changed and so the learning videos have become outdated. As more and more videos are added to the site, keeping them all current will be increasingly challenging. It would also be a good idea if the site contained a way of subscribing to new resources or to know when updates have been added. The site has been growing very quickly with at least one new section a week and so at the moment readers have to keep going there to see what has been added.

The biggest challenge will be to see how much further the site can grow in the near future. There is no advertising at the moment and so all content is completely free. How much longer this none-subscription model can be sustained, given the site’s increased popularity is an open question. Nevertheless, the concept of the site is a very useful and original one, and the videos are especially useful for technophobes as they take readers right through the basics of each technology in an easy to understand format. Some of the videos deal with trickier aspects of the different technologies but generally the level is set fairly low and gives ELT teachers the chance to get a solid grounding.
Wireless Ready: Interactivity, Collaboration and Feedback in Language Learning Technologies

An IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Event, Nagoya, Japan 29th March 2008

This is a one-day event organized by the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG and supported by JALTCALL, PacCALL, ELT Calendar.com, the Australian Flexible Learning Network, and the Consultants-e.com.

The event is a follow-up to ‘Wireless Ready: Podcasting and Mobile Assisted Language Learning’, held in Nagoya, Japan, on 24th March 2007. Online e-proceedings of the first event are available from: <wirelessready.nucba.ac.jp/eproceedings.html>.

As with the first Wireless Ready, the 2008 event will examine Web 2.0 technologies and emerging technologies in CALL.

Four of the main points of interest will be Interactive Whiteboard technology, video in the language classroom, feedback in language education, and the implications of m-learning.

Keynote speakers will include Dr John Collick (International Education Manager from Promethean UK), Russell Stannard (Westminster University), and Michael Coghlan (Australian ICT consultant).

Check the LT SIG website at: <http://ltsig.org.uk> and <wirelessready.nucba.ac.jp> for further information.

Case Study: How to Give Interactive Whiteboards a New Edge in the Classroom

Robert Bexon

In my experience, the mere mention of Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) for the average ELT teacher receives one of two responses; a creeping smile of self contentment from the technologically converted, to seeing the blood drain slowly from the faces of others.

Many criticisms are levelled at Interactive Whiteboards, some fairly and others not so, and many a sceptic is yet to be convinced as to the benefits afforded the classroom community from something that can be considered an expensive investment. However, investment in this technology by governments around the world is growing, with orders of tens and hundreds of thousands of boards not uncommon. From Central America to Russia the classroom is seeing a radical transition. My question is not when this change will become mainstream, but how can we manage the situation and bring the non-converted with us along the way?

The British Council had started to invest in IWBs and their teachers were preparing their classes incorporating this new medium. They were using New Cutting Edge, a title published by Pearson Longman, but the process of authoring their own materials was time consuming. The solution was that it would develop a digital version of this title for use on the IWB. The result was New Cutting Edge Digital. In moving this project forward Pearson Longman followed some simple rules.

1. The IWB does not replace the teacher
2. The IWB is a classroom management tool
3. Not every teacher is confident with technology
4. Multiple knowledge levels (amongst teachers
5. IWBs lead to good classroom practice

**The IWB does not replace the teacher**

The first point above is the most obvious, yet still deserves addressing. The basic dynamic of the classroom does not change – there is a board, a teacher and students. The balance between ‘book and board’ has to be given the same consideration as any other aspect of interaction in the classroom. Each teacher will find their own balance. What we wanted to do was to give them the tools in order to do this efficiently and effectively. We felt that a fully comprehensive support package would be required. As a result we addressed this on three levels: each interactive activity has an embedded help function on the CD Rom, the disk has a separate support section and each level has a fully comprehensive teacher’s guide.

**The IWB is a classroom management tool**

The second point is maybe less obvious to those who have not had access to the medium yet. The board becomes much more of a focal point due to the fact that you can project the students’ book pages onto it. This immediately becomes a timesaver; students can see immediately where the teacher wants them to be on the page – which exercise, photograph or paragraph they are to look at. The students spend more time with their heads up giving the teacher the opportunity to make eye contact and see immediately who is following the lesson and who is engaged. It also allows the teacher to feedback directly onto the particular part of the book, writing on the page on the board. The medium also allows the teacher to change the class focus or dynamic easily and quickly, in the moment, without prior need to prepare. The teacher has access to everything that is on their computer, including CD-Roms, the internet and all their pre-prepared activities.

**Not every teacher is confident with technology**

Under the third and fourth points we have to be aware that not everyone is confident with technology and creating a level playing field is a major concern. This is where Pearson Longman developed a partnership with Promethean. This partnership with one of the major suppliers of IWB hardware and software meant that Pearson Longman could develop a package that was easy to use for the uninitiated. At the same time it provided a base for experienced users fully to employ their skills.

**IWBs lead to good classroom practice.**

Finally, Pearson Longman were aware that simply through its presence in the classroom the IWB leads to good classroom practice. The teacher spends more time facing the students. Feedback and class control are managed from the focal point of the board. Students no longer bury their heads when asked to answer a question – leaving the teacher to guess who is genuinely checking for the answer and who is using this overly practised ‘heads down answer avoidance’ technique. With this in mind, Pearson Longman developed the book activities that most genuinely led to exploiting these benefits. Pearson Longman decided that reading texts required their own set of sub-skills that are predominately book based, hence reading activities are focussed to the printed page. Many exercises, such as ranking and collocation activities could be exploited by the software and designed into easy to use, pre-prepared activities for the teacher to access at the touch of the screen. Another feature to improve teachers’ experience was to include video and touch control tapescripts – where
the teacher can open the tapescript on the board and repeat and highlight phrases by simple touching the words.

IWBs seem to represent a genuine advance in technology that is here to stay. As prices of hardware become more affordable, all teachers will be able to savour this technological advance and, as a result, we will meet many more converted teachers.

Robert Bexon can be contacted by e-mail at: <robert.bexon@pearson.com>

Winner of the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Travel Grant for Exeter 2008

The Learning Technologies SIG is happy to announce that the travel grant has been awarded to Agnaou Abderrahim from Morocco, in order to assist him in attending the annual international conference in Exeter in 2008. Congratulations to him!

IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Committee Elections

The Learning Technologies SIG is happy to announce that after the call for nominations for positions falling vacant on the committee, the following officers have been elected:

- Newsletter: Pete Sharma
- Events: Paul Hullock
- Membership: Rodney Mantle

Pete Sharma is joining the committee and will be taking over editing the newsletter from January. Paul will be continuing his work as events coordinator, while Rodney will be our first membership officer.

Travel Grant
IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Travel Grant for Cardiff 2009

The Learning Technologies SIG is happy to announce that one travel grant (£400) will be awarded to a Learning Technologies SIG member in order to assist him/her in attending the annual international conference in 2009.

All LT SIG members are eligible to apply for the grant although priority will be given to WMS (Wider Membership Scheme) country members. Candidates should be presenting for the Learning Technologies SIG at the conference and be willing to write up their presentation for the SIG’s newsletter. To apply, you will need:

1. A one-page statement marked "Application for an LT SIG travel grant", indicating: your name, address, telephone and fax numbers, email address, and IATEFL membership number;
2. How attending the IATEFL conference will benefit you and your ESL/EFL community;
3. Why you need this travel grant;
4. A copy of the proposal you submitted for presentation at the International IATEFL Conference;
5. A short recommendation letter by your director, supervisor or a colleague.

You must:

1. Be a fully paid-up individual member of IATEFL and a member of the LT SIG;
2. submit your application and your speaker proposal form by the deadline of 15 September 2008;
3. Send the above documents marked ‘IATEFL LT SIG Travel Grant’ by post to: IATEFL, Darwin College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NY, UK by Monday 15 September 2008.

For more information, e-mail Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou, SIG Coordinator at: <yiansoph@cytanet.com.cy>
In 2001 as a graduate instructor in the University of Virginia’s Multicultural Education Program (MCE), I began using a courseware management system called E-folio. MCE creator Dr. Bob Covert consulted weekly with E-folio developer Dr. Yitna Firdyiwek to probe the inner workings and nuances of the tool and determine the most effective way to integrate it into the course (Holtzman, 2006). As a result of these meetings, not only did the tool undergo significant iterations, the MCE course itself underwent an evolution of sorts in light of the possibilities intrinsic to the new technology.

E-folio is a carefully crafted tool, developed by a professional educator to be ‘Teacher-centered Technology’. The tool came out of Dr. Firdyiwek’s need to manage student based portfolios in an intensive writing program that called for multiple instructors to be able to access student writing across an array of courses over several semesters (Firdyiwek, 2005). In the Multicultural Education program we used it to manage six separate sections of a course that required students to write 14 short reflection papers, 6 large papers, and several collaborative projects. It was a multi-tiered system, with different levels of access and responsibility for the different involved parties, ranging from the base need for team leaders, facilitators, to read and respond to student papers, to the 12 section leaders need for meta-review, curriculum management, and overall autonomy.

E-folio was designed to be teacher-centered technology, meaning its intention was to return the power of design choice, mode of implementation and use, to the instructor through a process of active decision-making. ‘Teacher-centered Technology’, or curricular organization tools differ from ‘Instructional Technology’ in that they are not designed to teach lessons, but to assist instructors in developing, planning and implementing curricula. E-folio can be used in the classroom to present material, but not as a replacement for instructors. It was designed to accomplish specific tasks, with larger pedagogical significance. From the developer’s standpoint, there are four main areas that E-folio was intended to help instructors facilitate: communication, ownership, curriculum development and technological inclusion. Separate from the capabilities of the tool is Dr. Firdyiwek’s conception of how the tool is supposed to be used (Holtzman, 2005). This difference, the separation between expected use and actual use as variations of the original understanding of the term ‘effective use’, is paramount to understanding the process of technological inclusion. Behind this categorization of expected use of courseware tools is the concept that tools are ‘specific’ by intention and design, not neutral. Therefore, instructors using tools in ways not intended or designed for might have trouble effectively integrating the tool into their courses.

No matter how carefully constructed a tool is, its integration into courses and alignment with instructors’ pedagogies takes time. Some tools, like E-folio, are designed to promote ‘ownership’ and encourage exploration of functions, allowing instructors the most opportunity to make the tool reflect their intentions.
However, no matter how explicit the expectations for use are, the process of technological inclusion into existing courses and curriculum is ultimately the responsibility of individual instructors. Their role, and the expertise they bring to academic environments should be acknowledged and respected.

This discussion is germane for a variety of reasons. Instructors seeking effective technological integration need to be aware of the impact of the developer’s decisions on embedded assumptions about teaching, learning, information processing, and basic cognition.

Furthermore, given the rapid rise of CMS on university campus, and the frequent accompanying administrative mandate to adopt a single standard, more and more of the decisions about the specific technology are being taken away from the teacher.

The 2003 campus computing survey reveals that about one-third of all college courses make some use of a CMS, up from 15 percent in 2000. Equally significant in tracking the rise of CMS: fully four-fifths (82 percent) of the colleges and universities participating in the 2003 campus computing survey report that their institution has established a "single product standard" for the campus CMS (Green, 2004, p. 18).

Courseware programs are powerful organizational and managerial tools that come embedded with assumptions about teaching, learning, and effective use. They are not neutral entities that can be introduced into existing courses or the curriculum without having a significant impact on methodology and operating procedures. For instructors seeking to effectively integrate new technology into established courses, a process of inclusion should be implemented, whereby the existing pedagogy is evaluated in light of the new possibilities inherent with the new technology. New technology can also bring new roles and responsibilities, introduce new parties, and challenge or contradict traditional assumptions about involvement, participation, and information processing. When integrating new technology into an existing curriculum it is up to the instructor to translate the developer’s expectations for use of the tool in a way that will ultimately be most effective with the established pedagogy, methods, and aims of the course.

In many ways it is easy to divide a discussion of technological integration into an existing course or classroom into two parts: the specific technology used and the pedagogy employed. The ubiquitous nature of courseware programs in educational environments raises many issues about the tools, technological inclusion and appropriate pedagogy. Because courseware programs are rapidly being installed in most colleges and universities it is important to define these programs and study their inclusion. There is a simultaneous need to instruct faculty in the best ways to use Course Management Systems (CMS), like E-folio. In some instances the problem identified with technological inclusion is not the program itself, but the rapid influx of new technology needing to be integrated properly into an existing academic structure.

Technology is not neutral; layers of purpose and intention are embedded within every tool. It is important that teachers seeking to properly integrate tools into established classrooms be conscious of the innate designs and functions of the tools in question. For example, E-folio is teacher-centered technology. Its ideal use is as a digital studio space to create curricula. It is not designed to handle certain administrative affairs therefore can be less
effective if used by teachers in ways not intended. E-
folio developer Dr. Yitna Firdyiwek, offers this insight
into effective technological integration:

You start by acknowledging the fact that one of the
ways technology eludes us is because it is sort of by
nature something that isn't really itself, it is a very
deceptive thing, it is always for something else, and so
it is very easy if we are not astute and careful of it to not
see it, we are constantly being effected by it. It is
constantly eluding us because it is never for itself
(Holtzman, 2005, 00:17:45).

Dr. Firdyiwek argues (Holtzman, 2005) that probing the
discrepancy between actual use and expected use
ultimately leads to an understanding of what constitutes
effective use of E-folio, and courseware programs in
general. The definition of the effective use of tools
should be viewed like a work in progress, which is
ultimately determined by users, not tool creators,
developers, or marketers. Other scholars in the field
(Lecourt, 2001) corroborate Dr. Firdyiwek’s sentiments;
that tools are not neutral, and so many have been
integrated unwittingly into our systems of education.

The uses of technology in classroom settings have
been limited mainly to augmenting instruction in content
areas or to teaching the technical skills necessary for
employment in an increasingly technological world.
Technology has, in short, been 'imported' into
classrooms as yet another ideologically neutral tool to
support the teaching of 'skills' deemed central to
professional certification (Lecourt, 2001, p. 84).

The overarching problem with technological integration
is the issue of neutrality. From appearance to content
management, communication and evaluation, certain
choices are made which gives authority to one and takes
away power from another of the involved parties. There
are really four involved parties in this discussion of
pedagogy and technological inclusion: developers,
administrators, instructors, and students. They can be
separated by their proximity to tools in terms of use and
function. Traditionally, developers are on one side of tools
with administrators, instructors, and students, on the other.
Linearly, the power moves from developers to
administrators in terms of technology, and from instructors
to students when considering pedagogy (personal use
philosophy). This occurs with most educational
developments, but especially so when considering
technological integration or tool inclusion.

All involved parties need to be aware of changing roles
and responsibilities and adjust accordingly. In this new
age of online education, courseware program developers
have influence on pedagogy and the educational
environment as well as instructors. Teachers who chose to
use textbooks with teacher's editions and coordinated
exams have long turned over a portion of the overall
design and functions of their classroom to a third party.

With the proper application, an online course can return
the power of design and content transmission to instructors
in a way that will allow students to maximize access and
interaction with course material, especially if integrated in a
critical and reflective manner.

Questions about proper pedagogy probe the difference
between 'expected use' and 'actual use'. 'Expected use' of
a tool comes from developers. 'Actual use' is by
instructors in academic environments. But what is
effective use? Effective use of courseware programs by
instructors occurs in the fusion between the prescribed
pedagogy for tools as determined by tool developers and
the instructor’s established pedagogy, curricular choices, and methodology. This fusion, generated through the process of inclusion is especially essential for the field of education, where tools imported into the classroom are often developed in other contexts for different purposes, have different pedagogies and operating principles, and therefore different expectations for effective use.

Researchers warn against the tendency to apply the tools without consideration for the rhetorical context and the needs of individual writers. Klem and Moran point to the false sense of security such programs might engender, including the sense that working at this level makes for a significant improvement in writing. They point to Bridwell, Noncarrow and Ross’ (Bridwell, et al. 1984) research that associated the interest in such tools with the origins of word processing in industry and business where the concerns were quite different from those in the educational environment (Firdyiwek, 2000, p. 53).

Tools are designed and developed by a person or group for a purpose. Very often that purpose can be contradictory to educational ideals or standards and often comes from outside the immediate educational community of instructors, administrators, and students. Accompanying these tools are guidelines for implementation and expectations for effective use. Instructors need to be aware of the assumptions embedded in any educational media about the nature of teaching and learning. Proper training in the use and function of specific technology, as well as becoming literate in the language and history of media and technology integration issues is a good way to prepare faculty for the inevitable changes that are happening so rapidly around them. Training of this nature is essential because so often new technology is imported to accomplish specific, pre-existing goals that do not take into account individual students’ needs, or the changing atmosphere around education, but continue to propagate an outdated methodology in new ways. It is important when working with tools to recognize that there are values, ideals and beliefs embedded in technology that ultimately come from developers and tool creators (Frechette, 2005). Regardless of the source, be it software designer or marketer, tools are inherently reflective of certain assumptions about the nature of teaching, learning, and the workings of the mind.

As Rozak (1994) remarks, most educators treat the computer primarily as a means of instruction: ‘What they may overlook is the way in which the computer brings with it a hidden curriculum that impinges upon the ideals they would teach. For this is indeed a powerful teaching tool, a smart machine that brings with it certain deep assumptions about the nature of mentality. Embodied in the machine there is an idea of what the mind is and how it works. The idea is there because scientists who purport to understand cognition and intelligence have put it there. No other teaching tool has ever brought intellectual luggage of so consequential a kind with it. A conception of mind - even if it is no better than a caricature - easily carries over into a prescription for character and value. When we grant anyone the power to teach us how to think, we may also be granting them the chance to teach us what to think, where to begin thinking, where to stop’ (Frechette, 2005, p. 111).

With the implementation and integration of commercially designed and developed educational tools comes a shift from the ideals of education to the goals of a market
Motivated by commercial interests and guided by the spirit of usury, schools are becoming markets, tools are products, and the students are consumers. One of the dangers implicit in this view occurs when what is popular sells, and begins to replace what works.

Tool neutrality is not a negative concept. Instructors need to recognize that tools come embedded with ideas about teaching and learning, often developed in an arena other than academia or education. Upon recognizing that, instructors can more easily choose appropriate tools, or align their existing pedagogies with certain programs, to avoid conflict and increase the impact of integration. The concern is that instructors who fail to adapt or evolve their pedagogy when integrating new tools may find many of their pedagogical decisions being made arbitrarily, or determined by the functions and operating principles of the tool itself.

To describe this process the term inclusion is used, referring to the ‘inclusion’ of the features, functions, and expectations for use of a tool, into an established course, classroom, or curriculum. The term ‘integration’ can be misleading because it implies equality, and this is not an even exchange. ‘Inclusion’ better reflects the onus on instructors to include and incorporate technology into existing (though hopefully updated and evolved) pedagogies.

There are many benefits that new technology brings; greater chances for diversity in modes and means of student participation, increased communication, a re-defining of the traditional classroom and community. However, if not monitored and evaluated, the instructor may find many of the decisions regarding student assessment, or roles and level of participation/interaction being governed by the embedded expectations for use intrinsic to the particular software package.

An effective pedagogy for technological integration is one of inclusion and synthesis. Instructors should actively engage in evaluating pedagogical goals when considering what is possible with new technology. First, instructors should recognize what it can do, and what they want it to do. Then, re-evaluate existing curricular materials and methodology so all learning objects, exercises and activities are aligned within their personal pedagogy. This helps the instructor retain autonomy over aspects of the course. One of the clear impacts of technological integration is that it allows administrators to reach a certain level of conformity concerning use of technology, yet affords instructors the chance to claim ownership over their particular method of inclusion, and sometimes even over tools themselves. When new technology has been selected for integration, and decided on by administrators or community leaders, the expectation exists for instructors to be able to decide on the particulars of the transfer to new platforms of courseware systems (VanDerKlink, Jochems, 2005). Very often this transition is assumed to occur, without proper guidance, or assistance of models to follow:

‘The true value of IEL [integrated e-learning] lies in its potential to reform education in the direction of new pedagogical approaches that promise to be able to meet future challenges such as competency-based education... Striving for more innovative types of education implies an approach in which technological, strategic, pedagogical and organizational views of implementation are integrated ... The nature of the integrated approach for
large-scale usage of IEL will depend, however, on the faculty's goals concerning the use of IEL' (VanDerKlink, et al., 2005, p. 154).

This sort of teaching environment will be new to many instructors who will have to be trained not only for effective integration but to a level of comfort with tools, programs, or courseware (or computer), so they can demonstrate and model familiarity with the product and process for the students. Students are often very adept in using and manipulating technology in ways instructors may not be. Students can often be more capable overall with new technology than instructors, possibly from having used it from an earlier age and in a wider array of areas. When this is the case, instructors who are not familiar with computers or certain courseware programs may not be able to anticipate problems, issues or areas of concern students may generate. This can cause confusion and detract from the overall effectiveness of the course.

Faculty training, to ascertain a certain degree of comfort and familiarity with new tools, may take a lot of time, but is essential to the process of effective technological integration. It is the role of the instructor when integrating or including new technology into existing curricula to translate the developer’s expectations for use into an effective pedagogy. This is not easy, but is essential when including new tools, courseware programs, or technology of any sort. What is more difficult, but so important, is for faculty to move beyond degrees of comfort with computers, to a point where they can begin to experiment, play, innovate, create, and develop truly effective digital courses, curriculum, and pedagogies. When this begins to occur, technological integration ceases to be an ungainly marriage of new tools and established ways, and can be seen as a process of evolution through synthesis and inclusion.

References


Curricula (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2006).


Samuel Holtzman is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Asian Studies at Nagoya University of Commerce & Business in Japan. He can be contacted at: <sholtzman@nucba.ac.jp>

GLoCAL Conference in Vietnam Successfully Concludes

Thomas N. Robb, GLoCALL Co-Chair

The first GLoCALL Conference (Globalization and Localization in CALL) successfully concluded in early November with a total of close to 500 participants, with approximately 200 local participants and 50-60 overseas participants at each site, Hanoi University, and the SEAMEO RETRAC headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City. This was the first time for two distinct organisations, APACALL, <http://www.apacall.org> and PacCALL <http://www.paccall.org> to jointly sponsor an event.

The conference was unusual in that it was a "travelling conference" with most presentations, including the plenaries repeated, first in Hanoi (November 2-5, 2007) and then in Ho Chi Minh City (November 6-7).

Plenaries included one by Scott Windeatt (Newcastle), Deborah Healey (Oregon State U., USA), Yueguo GU (Beijing Foreign Studies University) and one local speaker at each site, Nguyen Xuan Vang, President of Hanoi University who is a keen supporter of technology, and Le Huy Lam of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, who described how Powerpoint is often misused in classes both in Vietnam as well as abroad.

Most of the 60+ concurrent sessions at each site (with up to 6 simultaneously) were given by speakers from overseas, with regrettably only a handful by Vietnamese. The local site organizers ascribed this to two factors, 1) the problem of presenting in English and 2) the fact that the use of ICT is only in its infancy in Vietnam. This later fact
was borne out by the sluggish performance of web browsers for those who had to show material from servers overseas. The WWW truly lived up to its moniker, the "World Wide Wait." Nevertheless, Moodle, in particular has made clear in roads in Vietnam, being mentioned frequently by domestic and overseas presenters alike. Moodle.com now reports 141 registered sites in the country.

The abstracts for all sessions are publicly available at <http://glocall.org/program/printprog.php> for those interested in further details.

Photos
Some photos of the event are available at our Flickr.com group photo site at: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/571970@N20/>

GLoCALL in 2008
APACALL and PacCALL are currently exploring potential sites in the Philippines and Indonesia for the next GLoCALL conference. Look forward to an announcement towards the end of February 2008 at <http://glocall.org>.

Thomas N. Robb is the GLoCALL Co-chair and teaches at Kyoto Sangyo University in Japan. He can be contacted at: <tomrobb@gmail.com>

Correction
The article entitled, “Negotiation of Meaning in Digital Textbooks”, that appeared in the Spring 2007 edition of CALL Review, pp. 5-10, was authored by George K. Hondris, Stavros N. Demetriadis and Ioannis P. Vlahavas, and not as previously indicated.

Michael Thomas
Editor, CALL Review

Interactive Whiteboards in the Language Classroom
Paul Hullock

The "Interactive Whiteboards in the Language Classroom" IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG event was a one-day conference organised by the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG and sponsored by the Bell International Institute. It took place on Saturday 3rd November at the Bell International Institute in London. As we are all becoming increasingly aware, the ubiquitous Interactive Whiteboard can have a very positive effect on teaching and learning. However, as with any ICT tool, the impact on teaching and learning really does depend on how successfully the technology is integrated into classroom practice by the teacher. In short, Interactive Whiteboards have the potential to improve the language learning experience when they are used in tandem with effective teaching, and it was this desire to extend and transform learning through their use that brought us all together.

The conference attracted 50 participants and presenters from nine different countries and hosted five talks and workshops. The countries represented at the conference were England, Wales, Scotland, South Korea, Italy, Turkey, Iceland and Germany. The conference was very much focused on the practical applications of the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) in the English language learning classroom. As is always the case with LT SIG events, there was a wonderful mix of people, ideas, and teaching backgrounds. Delegates had lots of opportunities to see the practical applications of IWBS in the language learning classroom, as well as having opportunities to try out ideas presented.
Loraine Kennedy

The day kicked off with a presentation by Loraine Kennedy, the Centre Manager at Bell International London. Loraine and the Bell staff have been lucky enough to move to new premises and have had the luxury of being able to design their classrooms and learning areas from scratch. Loraine talked about the process of choosing and installing Interactive Whiteboards, and training and supporting staff (and students) in their use. As part of the process of using them Loraine also talked about the need for monitoring and responding to the reaction from both students and staff to an all-IWB environment and how this had impacted on successful teaching and learning. As many of us have just gone or are about to go through the process of having Interactive Whiteboards in our classrooms, this was a particularly useful session.

Julia Glass

Julia is the Interactive Content Manager for Promethean. The aim of Julia’s session was to get teachers started in using an Interactive Whiteboard for their classes. She ran through some of the basic functions of the Promethean Interactive Whiteboard that are applicable to the English language teaching classroom. She looked at basic functions such as saving, naming, producing attractive flipcharts, using templates, locking materials down so that they could not be accidentally altered, making permanent copies for a shared institutional materials bank, different ways of introducing existing content into digital flipcharts and, last but not least, navigating around a flipchart. Delegates also had great fun using the Promethean personal response system, a wireless voting handset that integrates with the Interactive Whiteboard and allows learners to “vote” or respond to questions with the results being instantly shown on screen as graphs. It was interesting to learn that learners often see the voting system as being the best way to use an Interactive Whiteboard to participate actively in the class and interact with both the teacher and their classmates.

Alexandra Pitt

Alexandra is the Middlesex University Preparation Programme Coordinator. Alexandra’s presentation looked at the use of Interactive Whiteboards from the perspective of fostering learner autonomy. Her session focused primarily on the learners and demonstrated ways in which the Interactive Whiteboard could be used to both build learner autonomy and also to develop a classroom community. Alexandra demonstrated how the Interactive Whiteboard can help teachers to be better prepared and less obviously in charge of the learning environment.

Later in her presentation she showed how using the Interactive Whiteboard in the English language learning classroom empowered students so that they became more involved in their classes and interacted with their fellow learners and their teacher more freely. Interestingly, Alexandra also spoke about how the Interactive Whiteboard had improved the quality of her students’ work. She further highlighted how the Interactive Whiteboard had brought about a change in her students’ attitude, which saw them starting to work harder outside the class, something which we would all agree is highly desirable.

Nick Lamarti

Nick Lamarti is a teacher with Bell International Institute in London. In his session Nick demonstrated a variety of very practical ways in which he integrates the Interactive Whiteboard into both his lesson preparation and his actual
classroom teaching. The session provided lots of different examples of how the IWB was able to enhance learning in the classroom through using the different tools available. In particular, Nick’s session looked at a range of the functions and capabilities of the Interactive Whiteboard and how these could easily be used to enhance a wide range of different course book and classroom activity types.

The breakout Workshops
The breakout workshops were a very interesting feature of the day. They gave delegates the chance to break up into smaller groups of about twelve people and move into three dedicated classrooms to try out the ideas and techniques presented in the workshops. The breakouts also allowed delegates to discuss issues arising from the presentations, ask questions that were directly relevant to their own teaching situation, and discuss and try out ideas and possible solutions.

Plenary
The day finished with an open question-and-answer session where delegates and presenters were able to discuss issues arising from the day. Without going into too much detail, it would be fair to say that we all agreed that the Interactive Whiteboard has the potential to transform English language learning, by creating new learning paradigms that are a direct result of the increased potential for interaction between the teacher, the learners, the English language and the actual technology itself.

Paul Hullock is the events coordinator for the Learning Technologies SIG and can be contacted at: <p.hullock@uea.ac.uk>.

The Podcast Review
Jason Byrne

We are looking at the world of podcasting, with an interest in what we might be able to make use of in the English classroom or suggest to our students for self-study. This time I am highlighting some bilingual podcasts from Japan.

SEIG Radio
<http://seigradio.com>
Level: Intermediate to Advanced
This is a good one. David Gann is the main force behind this podcast. There is a lot here. Personally, I like the interviews with a wide variety of people, who have experienced living in different cultures, for example, Canada, Japan and the USA.

Interview: Mehran speaks to Barbara Krumbach; English Time: Making Requests
Posted by admin on December 3rd, 2007

LISTEN Mehran returns with a vengeance, both interviewing exchange student Barbara Krumbach and join David during English Time for a discussion of “making requests.”

This podcast is particularly good for Japanese learners or people with a strong interest in Japan. Many of the podcasts while mostly in English, do contain some Japanese as well. The strong multi-cultural feel is something I find very refreshing.

The One Point Lesson
<http://www.seigakuin.jp/eca/listen/index.html>
Level: Elementary to Advanced
This podcast hosted by Mehran Sabet and Mutsuko Nagasaki offers a conversational, very fluent bilingual exchange in both English and Japanese. The topic is
understanding phrasal verbs and the target audience are Japanese High School students.

However, I personally found listening to this podcast very useful for my Japanese study. I have also placed it on CD and played it in adult community classes in Japan. Most people have found it to be of great interest. I hope you enjoy referring to these podcasts in your language classes.

Jason Byrne teaches English at a University in Saitama, Japan. Jason is a trained computer programmer with interests in various areas of CALL and Communication Technology. He can be contacted at: Jason Byrne <jbyrne@jamaby.com>

Milan Event Report: Joint LTSIG & British Council Event, 26th-28th, November
Gary Motteram

A lot goes into running an LTSIG Conference and a lot of people too often go unsung. So, before I start to tell you about the actual Conference itself and a flavour of what I managed to see and hear there, let me thank as many people as I can who made the event happen. Number 1 is David Fryatt, Senior Teacher at the British Council, Milan who worked long hours to make sure that the event took place and worried both about budgets and the delivery of chairs (both concerned with the bottom line, as it were). Next, in no particular order: Tamara Berti who organised the registration team; Emanuela Sias who produced the brochure, organised delegate packs, arranged publicity and much else besides; Lucia Legnazzi who publicised the event among local teachers; Suzanne Schumacher and Giuseppe Monti who were responsible for technical questions and IT support and Jill Martin whose experience in organising previous conferences was invaluable. We must also thank all the teachers and other helpers who acted as room managers, moved chairs and tables and sorted technical difficulties. On the IATEFL and LTSIG side we must thank Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou for her invaluable advice, Pete MacKichan for his work on the website and Craig Dennett and other colleagues at IATEFL HO for the work they do in registering people, providing useful advice and documents. We must also thank all the speakers and the audience without whom a Conference would never happen anyway and the sponsors who play a big role in helping to finance the whole event.
Well, having done all that, let’s move on to the Conference itself. This was held at the British Council School in Central Milan although the plenaries were held at a local cinema attached to a school.

On a bright and sunny Monday morning (the weekend had been cold and wet) we were welcomed by Paul Docherty, Director of the British Council in Italy, who pointed out that the conference included people from over 20 countries and that there were over 80 presentations. There were also a good number of commercial organisations who were part of the publishers’ exhibition and who were significant in making the conference a success.

Plenaries

We were then treated to four excellent plenaries who admirably painted the backcloth against which the whole conference could be played out:

Gisella Langé

Gisella Langé from the Italian Ministry of education put language learning into the broader European as well as the Italian context. We were reminded of the eight competences of lifelong learning, two of which are foreign languages and digital competence. She quoted David Graddol’s description of language moving from a subject in the curriculum to being a core skill and with this change of function introduced the increasing role that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is having on the curriculum in many European schools. CLIL is when language becomes part of the teaching of other subjects, e.g. history or mathematics, thus using it as a core skill. Technology clearly must play a significant role in the interdisciplinary and intercultural nature of the CLIL process, it is also helping with a more portfolio orientation to assessment.

Pete Sharma

Pete Sharma gave us a general overview of the roles that technology is playing in many classrooms around the world, starting by pointing out that technology is increasingly being ‘blended’ with conventional classroom work to enable our teaching to be more ‘wired’, thus potentially appealing to the net generation (Prenski) for whom there is plenty of material around. He suggested that there were eight key technologies (not related to the eight competencies): the Internet itself with its wide range of resources and itself an enormous databank of language; the DVD ROM that is increasingly being used by publishing companies to add value to textbooks; electronic dictionaries which are customisable by learners, or targeted at a particular course; interactive whiteboards which are increasingly being used across the world; ready-made online materials from a variety of publishers; podcasts for learning on the move; wikis for collaborative learning; and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) where materials can be stored for learner use.

Pete summarised by saying that the teacher would be central to making blended learning a reality for the future and should be led by pedagogy to move beyond the ‘wow’ factor (Murray and Barnes, 1998).

Bernd Rüschoff

Bernd Rüschoff (see next built us a house (you will be able to find the PowerPoint on the website, showing the house) where he brought together Web 2.0 technologies with...
current SLA theory and pedagogical practice. He pointed out that the Web 2.0 surfer was no longer alone and that with the new technologies we have a shift in the philosophy of the net to a space which encourages participation, collaboration and democracy, where content is created by the masses and these masses are increasingly the younger generation.

Bernd quoting Purushotma (2005) asked how we can take all these new learning tools and spaces and put them together to make a coherent learning experience. He answered this by quoting Wertsch (1985) who said "it's all about people operating [co-operating by means of] mediating tools." By doing this the learners are negotiating language output, 'languaging' as Swain (2006) has put it.

Bernd finally described a series of Web 2.0 projects he and his colleagues at the University of Essen are engaged in, outlining how these ideas are being put into practice.

Gavin Dudeney

Our plenaries ended in 2nd Life, which Gavin Dudeney characterised for us. He was prepared to make one prediction and that while we might not all ultimately enter 2nd Life that the web would in 5 years time look more like the 2nd Life environment.

Gavin pointed out that the number of registered users of 2nd Life is increasing rapidly and they include colleges and universities as well as commercial organisations and media companies. He also said that one of its attractions was that you could do in 2nd Life many educational activities that couldn’t be done effectively on courses in real life, for example: build a house, model chemicals, walk through parts of the human body and have conversations in a number of languages with other people. He suggested that we can collaborate, create and engage in authentic conversations. There are the possibilities for real-time interaction with a number of partners, active engagement, flexible learning pathways which can take account of learner styles.

The plenaries provided a useful backdrop for the rest of the conference, which following the plenaries moved to the British Council teaching centre on via Manzoni Street. Here we had access to up to six parallel sessions at any one time, so my report will be somewhat partial, but I will try to reflect the different topics that were available. There was a very good range as you can see from the programme on the Learning Technologies SIG website and a good deal of it dealt with the sorts of Web 2.0 technologies that had been referenced in the plenaries. Sessions were also relevant to the different age phases: primary, secondary and tertiary.

The parallel sessions – Monday

Elementary podcasts

My first visit was to hear about an elementary level podcasting project from the British Council where we were told about the decision-making process that was gone through in the design of the materials. Elementary materials (CEF A2) are being concentrated on here, because there was felt to be too little of this level around on the web. The materials are designed to link to the A2 CEF ‘Can do’ statements for Listening. It was decided to present these A2 materials in an approximately 25-minute scripted magazine format divided into small bite-size chunks and recorded by actors. A typical structure for a podcast includes: initial conversational gambits or situations (based on a student living in the UK); a conversational long turn which might be vox pops; an interview; and also
My final session on the Monday was with the only people to take up our challenge of delivering their talk from a distance. These were Cristina Costa based at Salford University in the UK and Ramona Dietrich working in an international school in Portugal. They met while working with the Portuguese navy teaching English to naval officers and made a number of suggestions on how blogs could best be utilised for supporting language development. They said that for blogs to be successful teachers need to interact on a regular basis with the students. The key function that they saw for blogs was as motivational tool for learners whose motivational level was pretty low. The learners would be happy to go home and to show their parents what they were doing online.

In order to make this session happen we made use of Interwise at Salford University which worked well. For further details contact <c.mendesdacosta@salford.ac.uk>

Blogging in the EFL classroom

The parallel sessions – Tuesday

Promethean Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs)

We were given an introduction to ActivStudio 3.0 which is Promethean’s development software now made available to teachers to create their own materials. These materials consist of ‘flipcharts’ which can contain an impressive number of features. We were shown how to set up a background, how to import pictures both from the clip art that comes with the software as well as taking pictures from the web. We were shown how to hide and reveal material by using the eraser, the blind and spotlight feature. We were also shown that both sound could be recorded into the boards and that external exercises could be embedded. As well as teachers making their own materials, there are also materials available both from Promethean as well as all the major ELT publishers.
Promethean materials can be downloaded from the web at: <www.prometheanlearning.com> along with a viewer that would work on any kind of IWB. For teacher support in using boards and developing materials, you can visit <www.prometheanplanet.com>

*Maritime English*

This was a two-hour workshop presented by an Italian colleague, Manuella Reguzzoni, on ESP, particularly aimed at maritime English (clearly a popular topic in southern Europe). Manuella showed us a number of tools that could be used in support of the teaching of maritime English which she built around a text on the ‘Sinking of the Titanic’. We were asked to consider the nature of the text and then decide on its complexity as well as guess about level and work out the types and tokens in the text. We were then shown how to do this electronically making use of a piece of software called Word Classifier. We were shown how e-book software was useful in wrapping up a number of activities and directed to Manuella’s website: <www.itnautico.it> for further information.

In the afternoon I went to three different British Council sessions, showing the diversity of online projects that they are engaged in around the world:

*Wikiquest*

This was an exploration of the use of Wikipedia for quest activities. Instead of doing quests on the open web Brian Sullivan (from the British Council in Poland) proposed that we do them on Wikipedia. He suggested the simplified version of Wikipedia for more elementary learners. As with webquests, learners are given a series of statements or questions to explore and check on. The questions can be given on paper, on an IWB, online, or orally. For more information contact:<brian.sullivan@britishcouncil.pl>

*Social networks and teenage language learners*

This talk explored the use of a specially set-up social network at the British Council in Madrid. Steve Evans was looking at new ways to provide learner support and is exploring the use of social networking software for this purpose. He did some research with young learners in Madrid and noticed that on a test of multiple intelligences his students did not score well on intrapersonal skills. He remembered reading an article by Palmberg (2002) saying that coursebooks contain a lot of intrapersonal materials and wondered whether this might be a problem for his own students. The social network site tries to help the students develop their intrapersonal skills and as a result provide them with an effective support network. The site is built on a mixture of NING <http://www.ning.com/> and Google Applications a <www.google.com> and is carefully controlled to protect younger learners.

*Online English*

This site has similarities to the one described above, but is built on a very different technology: *Drupal* <http://drupal.org/>. Ian Roberts and Andy Newton gave us a quick opening test on China, which the members of the audience passed with flying colours. Their website <http://www.englishonline.org.cn/> has been online since September, but already has 11,000 users. The idea is to provide a site that fits in with the lifestyle of typical 18-22 year old learners. They gave us a case study of Adele, who “snacks” the Internet. She goes online three to four times a day to keep up with her friends and what is happening. If she wanted to, she could also access the site on her mobile. The site contains the typical tools of a social software site, but mixed in with a range of language
materials which they hope will make the website “sticky”, these include a virtual soap with the soap characters being members of the community and newly created programs like Wordshake which can be played collaboratively.

The parallel sessions – Wednesday
I was only able to stay for the morning on Wednesday as the day job was beckoning me back to the UK, but I managed to squeeze in three more sessions; as before I tried to range across different topics.

IT resources for exam preparation
This session took us through a range of materials that can be used by teachers and learners to get exam practice materials, or information about the many different ELT examinations that are available. The presenter, Margaret Fowler, asked the audience what teachers and students wanted from the web and the key topics that were suggested included: practice; listening activities; strategies; help with setting and marking exams. She then took us on a tour of a number of resources that are available for different exams including such materials as self-tests <www.learnenglish.org.uk> and various exam practice and information sites: English Live (www.selfaccess.com); Flo-Joe <www.flo-joe.co.uk>. Other materials can, of course, be found on publishers’ websites, but the big plea from the audience was for more free materials online, publishers please note.

MP4 and the literature teacher
Rosaura Hernández Avila came from Venezuela to talk to people about the way she makes use of MP4 materials to support the teaching of literature in her university. Her MP4 player connected easily to the computers and we were then treated to a number of materials that she made use of with her students. She said that she was a great believer in students being able to hear literature being read, particularly with poets, but also with novels as well. She both records here own materials as well as downloading from the web. She argued that having access both to sound and, in some cases, video, helped her learners to be able to access the language more effectively to be able to pronounce new words, to be able to access the meaning of the writer in the way that they read, to get a clearer insight into the images embedded in the material and knowledge of the topic. For audio literature online she recommended:
<www.audible.com>

Teenage 2nd Life
I finished my time in Milan in a session exploring Teenage 2nd life with Kyle Mawr who works in Barcelona, a fitting end to an enlightening conference. Kyle showed us a wide range of resources that are being assembled in the British Council Teenage 2nd Life space which is designed to be used for supplementary practice. Here there are more conventional areas like classrooms, libraries and theatres, but also Alternate Reality Games which are designed to both be motivating and give language practice. The games can be played in groups on individually and are designed to keep the teenagers coming back on a regular basis.

I went away from the conference with a lot of ideas buzzing around in my head and am sorry that I couldn’t attend a broader range of sessions. On the website I will put some pictures and a shorter version of this review. We also hope to have one or two mp3s for you to access.
References


Gary Motteram is the deputy coordinator of the Learning Technologies SIG and works at the University of Manchester, UK. He can be contacted at: <gary.motteram@manchester.ac.uk>

IATEFL CALL Review

Do you have something to write about?

it to CALL Review

Contact Pete Sharma at: <pete.sharma@btopenworld.com>
Discussion Forum

The Learning Technologies SIG Discussion Forum, hosted at Yahoo! Groups, is a free, easy-to-use email group service. All teachers and other language teaching professions are welcome to join the Discussion Forum email list.

The Web address of the Learning Technologies Discussion Forum is: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LearningTechnologiesSIG/>. The forum is moderated and all messages are checked before members receive them, and after members post them. The aims of the forum are:

• To raise awareness among ELT professionals of the power of the computer to assist with language learning
• To contribute to the knowledge base as to how computers can be used for English language learning
• To develop expertise in the myriad of uses of computers with their language learners

Comments, suggestions, opinions, ideas, and questions about all possible uses of computers and/or technology with language learners are welcome. Many themes are addressed by the Discussion Forum, among which are:

• Multimedia
• WWW
• Speech technologies
• Corpora
• Intelligent CALL
• Communication technologies
• Self Access
• Conferences
• Anything technical

We hope you find belonging to the forum useful!

View the Archived Messages

Anyone can visit the Web pages that act as archives for the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Discussion forum, and view the messages by thread, that is, by topic, or by date - chronologically.

To subscribe

To start sending to and receiving messages from members of the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Discussion Forum, you need to join or subscribe to the email list. You can join the list at this Web page: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LearningTechnologiesSIG/>

Alternatively, you can send a mail to: <LearningTechnologiesSIG-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>

To Contact the Forum Moderator

For further information, or in case of difficulty, or for any other queries, you can contact Gary Motteram, the Discussion Forum Moderator.

Gary is available by e-mail at the following address: <gary.motteram@manchester.ac.uk>
How to Get More Involved in the SIG

The IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG is entirely dependent upon the interest and enthusiasm of its members.

Most immediately, you can get involved by joining our free email-based Discussion Forum moderated by Gary Motteram, the Deputy Coordinator.

If you have any ideas or contributions for the CALL Review newsletter, please contact Michael Thomas, the Newsletter Editor.

If you have any suggestions for events, or feel that you can make any contribution to our activities, please contact Paul Hullock, the Events Coordinator.

If you have any other queries, suggestions or comments, please contact Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou, the SIG Coordinator, or one of the other Committee members on our Contact Us page.

If you have any suggestions for the Web site, please contact Pete MacKichan, the Webmaster.

Special Events

The IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG runs at least three special events a year. When possible, we post reports on previous SIG events, and announce forthcoming SIG events.

Travel Grants

The IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG is happy to announce that starting with the Conference in April 2008, one travel grant of £400 will be available to IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG members in order to assist them in attending the annual IATEFL International Conference. More information about travel grants for IATEFL LT SIG members is available from HQ.

The CALL Review newsletter

The IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG has a high quality, regularly produced newsletter (three times a year), the CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) Review. (It used to be called MUESLI News).

Web links

A selection of handy EFL/ESL hyperlinks, chosen by the Webmaster (often from member suggestions), and grouped according to a number of different categories that are useful to teachers.

Update Yourself

Some of you will recently have received an e-mail from me introducing new members of the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG committee. But many of you will not have got anything as we don’t have email addresses for you - or the ones we have are out of date and not working.

We would very much like to be able to keep in touch with you on a regular basis, with news, updates, questions, comments, reports, etc.

If you would like to update your IATEFL LT SIG profile, please get in touch with me directly with the following information:

First name
Family name
IATEFL Membership number
e-mail address

I will then ensure that your details are updated. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou
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How do I become a member of IATEFL?

IATEFL links, develops and supports English language teaching professionals worldwide.

Joining IATEFL is easy!

Use our online membership form at:
<www.iatefl.org/join.asp>

or for more information, please contact:
Jeanette McEwan:
<membership@iatefl.org>

Tel: 44 (0) 1227 824430
Fax: 44 (0) 1227 824431

IATEFL Darwin College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NY.

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Web: <www.iatefl.org>

Learning Technologies Special Interest Group

The IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG, which began in the mid-1980s, is one of the largest and oldest of the IATEFL SIGs, reflecting the interest in and potential of computers both in society and in ELT. It is concerned with all issues to do with using technology for language learning or language teaching. It focusses especially on the use of computers and IT in EFL, including the use of corpora and concordancers, multimedia, computer mediated communication, text-based software, authoring, and the WWW.

Aims

- To raise awareness among ELT professionals of the power of the computer to assist with language learning and teaching.
- To develop members’ expertise in the myriad uses of computers for language learning or teaching.
- To provide a forum for the discussion of issues relating to the use of computers in ELT.
- To contribute to the knowledge base in ELT on good practice and latest developments in using computers in language teaching and learning.

Activities

The IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG:

- Produces a newsletter, the CALL Review, three times a year, available only to members of IATEFL.
- Organizes CALL and IT-related events in the UK and overseas, at least three times a year, with discounts for IATEFL members.
- Runs a free Discussion Forum.

How to join

To join you must belong to IATEFL. Membership of IATEFL brings additional benefits, including the main IATEFL Newsletter and a variety of publications.

How to get (more) involved

You can get involved by joining our free email-based Discussion Forum moderated by Gary Motteram.

If you have any ideas or contributions for CALL Review, please contact, Michael Thomas, the Editor at:
<michael.thomas@nucba.ac.jp>

IATEFL Annual Conference

Exeter 7th - 11th April, 2008

Visit the conference website at:
<http://www.iatefl.org/conference.asp>
Below are seven of the hottest topics in Information Communication Technologies. If you are interested in writing about them or have an idea for a column of your own, contact the CALL Review editor.

VLEs
Since the proposed merger between Blackboard and WebCT, the main competition for Virtual Learning Environments is between Blackboard and open-source solutions such as Moodle. Current research suggests that many institutions favour the free open-source Moodle environment as an alternative to the more expensive Blackboard.

$100 Laptop
The recent UN Summit on the Information Society, held in Turin, focused on the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to bridge the digital divide between first and third worlds. One idea to advance these developments is that of the MIT sponsored $100 laptop, an initiative that hopes to improve access and affordability.

iPod Education
The success of Apple’s iPods has had a great impact on the music business around the world. iPods are now also being used to develop educational initiatives in colleges and universities. Are iPods just the latest gimmick or can they be used in the EFL classroom?

Doctorate in EFL
Over the last five years a number of distance learning doctoral degrees in Applied Linguistics have appeared. They are often expensive and require periods of residence. Frequently they are targeted at the overseas teaching community. As more and more teachers acquire masters degrees, the doctoral courses are seen as providing the new standard, and many employers in the university sector will only appoint candidates with a relevant doctoral degree in hand. What is your experience of these programs?

Masters Online
A masters degree has now overtaken the diploma as the benchmark qualification around the world. Do you have any experience of using ICTs to obtain a degree? How did you react to an online learning environment? Would you in retrospect choose a full-time program? Why would you recommend participation in an online masters in EFL?

Mobile Learning
Mobile or m-learning is being promoted as one of the leading new frontiers of ICT. What are the implications for pedagogy? Have you been involved in a project using m-learning? There are currently so few case studies on m-learning in EFL.

Interactive Whiteboards
Schools in the UK have been using interactive whiteboards over the last few years. They are much rarer in Europe and Asia.

ICT News .... ICT News ... ICT News

The online Education Guardian, June 5th, reports on the use of the new Enciclomedia project in Mexico: <http://education.guardian.co.uk/elearning/story/0,2095173,00.html>.

The Chronicle of Higher Education you can now take a tour of the MIT campus in Second Life and watch video from the latest EDUC2007 event showing what’s new in the world of educational technology: <http://chronicle.com/multimedia/?nav>.

Another story in the Education Guardian discusses the role of second life for virtual classrooms and virtual campuses: <http://education.guardian.co.uk/elearning/story/0,2074241,00.html>.