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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

by **Jarek Krajka**

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The current issue of *Teaching English with Technology* marks its jubilee – it was four years ago, in January 2001, that the first issue of the Journal was published. When the group of enthusiasts from IATEFL Poland Computer Special Interest Group, headed by the humble undersigned, decided to start a practical journal for English teachers, it was not envisaged that the demand for this specific type of publication would be unfading and constantly growing, leading to a steady flow of contributions maintaining both the continuity and proper quality. It has to be stressed that what was to make the Journal distinct from other existing publications was the highly practical nature, with the greater space devoted to ready-made lesson plans, classroom activities, tutorials, software and website reviews, which could be taken by teachers and implemented in a wide variety of contexts. Also, the authors have tried really hard to make the Journal as universal as possible in its impact, without reference to highly specific teaching contexts. It is hoped that with further contributions of the same kind, *Teaching English with Technology* will continue to provide a wide range of classroom solutions, demonstrating the practical implementations of technology enhancing the teaching process.

The current issue, already bearing number 20 in a total count, reflects a wide range of issues that could be of interest to teachers, with three leading themes: pronunciation, culture and writing. On the one hand, Włodzimierz Sobkowiak, in his article "Pronunciation in EFL CALL", provides a thorough study of a variety of aspects involved in the exploitation of computer capacities for pronunciation instruction. Another article in the issue, "Language Teaching and Culture: Australian Language and Culture on the Web" by Renata Setmajer-Chylinski, outlines the basic models of integration of culture and language teaching for the development of linguistic and intercultural awareness, providing also a comprehensive review of Australian culture sites. Following the same line, Monika Nader makes a website

review of British culture sites, demonstrating how varied authentic online materials can provide interesting input for language learning.

Two contributions in the Internet Lesson Plans section show the applications of ICT in the area of writing instruction: on the one hand, Bernardine McCreesh encourages teachers to introduce the issue of limericks to practise students' awareness of rhythm in English, which is shown in a comprehensive lesson with offline and online activities. Similarly, Gavin Dudeney focuses on the creative writing on the Net, using a Web-based novel to improve IT and reading skills, as well as provide practice in collaborative writing.

It is hoped that this issue of *Teaching English with Technology* will be found useful by many teachers interested in enhancing their instruction with Information and Communication Technology.

ARTICLES

PRONUNCIATION IN EFL CALL [1]

by **Włodzimierz Sobkowiak**

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Abstract

State of the art in pronunciation-oriented EFL CALL is reviewed from the pedagogical perspective. Discussion touches upon CALL flexibility, coverage, declarative vs. procedural knowledge, L1-sensitivity, multimedia employment and automatic speech recognition (ASR). Six different CALL programs are briefly evaluated from these points of view: *Fluency*, *Pronunciation Power*, *Connected Speech*, *Better Accent*, *ISLE* and *Tell Me More*. Future promises and challenges in speech-enabled EFL CALL are outlined, such as speech synthesis, multimodality in man-machine communication and (speech-to-speech) machine translation.

1. Introduction

All three terms appearing in the title of this text beg for definitions, explanations and discussion. They are in the mainstream of current foreign language pedagogy, on the one

hand, and they are all multiply ambiguous, on the other. To illustrate the former claim, one would only need to mention the heated dispute on the standards of English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) pronunciation teaching, which has been raging over Europe for some time now, and has found some reflexes in Poland as well [2]. Or the well-known fact that English is the most widely taught foreign language in the world, with views to become the one and only true *lingua franca* of the globe. Or the tempestuous development of computer-assisted (English) language learning (CALL) over the last decade or so. To illustrate the latter claim, it would be enough to point at the notorious fuzziness of 'foreign' in EFL (as opposed to 'second', for example), or that of 'learning' (in CALL). Even 'pronunciation' turns out to be definitionally problematic on certain levels of phonetic reflection, if only because it is not a simple synonym of 'phonetics'.

To start this discussion at this point, however, would be to jeopardize the main aim of the paper by getting swamped in layers upon layers of metalinguistic and methodological details and distinctions. And the main aim of the paper is, after all, not to conduct methodological discourse, but rather to present a critical snapshot of the current state of art at the interface of the three areas listed in the title. This interface area itself is enormous and it tends to exhibit a breathtaking pace of innovation, mostly due to the rapid development of computer technology (some authors prefer ICT – Information and Communication Technology – but I will stick with the simpler term). In this situation, I can entertain no hope of ever managing to provide a comprehensive and completely up-to-date account of the whole area. The sampling I made is of necessity subjective and fragmentary. For example, mainly for reasons of space, I am not going to venture into the exciting world of on-line Internet pronunciation teaching and learning, even though distance education is among the most fashionable themes in current foreign language pedagogy. The discussion will thus be restricted to 'localized' CALL, which could also be called 'off-line' or CD-ROM- (or DVD-) based. Even so dramatically circumscribed, the area is still too large to treat representatively. Out of many potentially interesting issues I will select only a few. Out of hundreds of available CALL programs, I will present but a handful. Out of their many components and functionalities, I will concentrate on those which I regard as central to my theme.

The organization of the remainder of this text is as follows: first I will discuss some key issues in EFL CALL pronunciation, then some relevant software will be presented and briefly

analyzed from the point of view of the preceding discussion, finally a rather informal glimpse of the future will close the paper.

2. Computer-assisted pronunciation teaching and learning

2.1. Flexibility

CALL researchers have successfully argued (e.g. Kaliski 1992, Warschauer 1996, Warschauer & Healey 1998, Kern & Warschauer 2000) that one of the main strengths of CALL is its didactic flexibility. Unlike some other educational technologies which have been implemented in schools over the ages (from blackboards to video, say), computers will fit any didactic approach, method or technique, if used skillfully. Grammar-translation supporters may use them to expedite translation practice from L2 to L1, for example, with machine-translation software. Audio-lingualists will be able to control their students' structure drilling with the computer in much more sophisticated ways than they could in the traditional language laboratory. Cognitivists will sit their learners in front of adventure games, where they will have to navigate an unknown territory using their linguistic competence. Communicatively-minded teachers may pit learners against each other in a simulation game to make them negotiate meanings to reach agreed-upon goals.

This flexibility of CALL is true also on phonetic ground. Practically all multimedia programs presented below, though to varying degrees, can be accommodated into different pronunciation-teaching philosophies. Specifically, both the 'know-that' declarative knowledge component, and the 'know-how' procedural skill component of phonetic competence can be appealed to in various ways, for example through multiple-choice exercises and listen-repeat-compare tasks, respectively. Despite common belief, pronunciation-oriented CALL has not given up on the old techniques in favour of the razzle-dazzle display of vibrant hypermedia. Rather – quite wisely in my opinion – it has accommodated the new technological achievements such as speech recognition, for example, into a versatile framework of structures and functionalities where each learner and teacher can find something to fit his needs and preferences.

2.2. Coverage

An issue related to CALL's flexibility is its coverage. The classic core of pronunciation training in the traditional syllabus includes segments, suprasegmentals, fast speech phenomena, grapho-phonemics, accentual variation. On the level of particular textbooks, courses and materials there is enormous variation, of course, both in choice and priority of these elements. Communicative language learning, for example, brought with it the preference for prosody in pronunciation teaching, with some courses actually beginning from rhythm, stress, juncture and intonation. This is now changing, with the advent of the post-communicative era in foreign language teaching. Regardless of fashions and vacillations, however, the canon is reasonably well defined.

Contemporary pronunciation-oriented CALL is able to deliver instruction in all those canonical areas. There are programs concentrating mostly on individual sounds of English, as well as those which cater predominantly for suprasegmentals. Some would specifically target natural (fast) speech, while others would proudly (and politically-correctly) offer different accents from speakers of different skin colour. This is not to say that a particular piece of software will necessarily include the full phonetics syllabus. Unlike with the methodological flexibility of section 2.1., coverage of phonetic substance is of necessity much more 'hard-wired' in the structure of the package. It will be obvious from the short software presentations below that programs tend to specialize in certain sub-areas of the pronunciation syllabus. What is crucial, however, is that there is now no technological obstacle to using CALL in any of the canonical components.

2.3. Declarative versus procedural knowledge

This dichotomy was mentioned above in 2.1. It appears to be among the most fundamental distinctions in all foreign language teaching, including teaching pronunciation. It captures the intuitively rather obvious truth that in order to do anything one must have – in varying proportions depending on the actual activity – both the 'theoretical' and 'practical' competence. Unlike syntax and vocabulary, pronunciation in a foreign language has traditionally been regarded as the exclusive province of the latter; hence murderous drilling in the audio-lingual method and little explicit teaching in the cognitive-communicative era. The

pendulum now appears to be swinging in the other direction, so that the declarative, explicit, 'know-that' meta-competence is back in the picture, with researchers trying to feed it into the process of phonetic proficiency building (see, e.g. Dziubalska-Kořaczyk 2002). In the academic context of EFL, for example, this means that the so-called 'descriptive grammar' of English should be well integrated with the practical phonetics syllabus, so that students practicing, say, the intricacies of English obstruent voicing could fall back on their knowledge concerning laryngeal excitation source-filter models, as well as 'external' evidence from their L1 interference, speech errors, speech play, and the like.

CALL supports both types of knowledge. Most multimedia pronunciation programs are not content to provide the learner with ample opportunities to use his articulators, whether for simply recording utterances or for actual simulated dialogues. There is usually also explicit instruction concerning such matters as correct articulation and voicing, keeping the right rhythm, varying the pitch for intonation, using appropriate lexical and sentential stress patterns, and the like. This instruction may appear in many different forms in the program: as mini-lectures, glossaries, multimedia presentations, help files, task prompts, error messages, and many others. Some packages offer manual-like functionalities which can be used more or less like traditional textbooks, complete with comprehension questions and suggestions on further reading.

2.4. L1 sensitivity

Where there is still a lot of room for improvement is how CALL relates to the native tongue of the user. The sad truth is that in very many cases it simply does not. There appear to be two main reasons for this state of affairs, one commercial, the other linguistic. The former has to do with cost-effectiveness mostly: to prepare a large CALL package with all the currently expected multimedia bells and whistles is an extremely expensive undertaking, much more so than, say, a traditional course with manuals, exercise books and audio tapes. The large investment will only pay off if the package can be used on a global scale with all thinkable L1 learners. Investing in a multi-CD EFL course for Poles only, for example, is hardly commercially viable. Exceptions to this rule are small programs made locally or localized versions of the leading packages made in the West. Even these, however, seldom

go beyond simply translating the metalanguage and fitting local translations to the existing monolingual built-in dictionary.

This appears to be due to the other reason mentioned above. While we may know a lot about L1 transfer and interference on the theoretical level, there are huge lacunae of knowledge in the actual application of this information in the speech-enabled CALL setting. For example, the CALL craze of the last few years – speech recognition (see below) – has hardly reached a stage where it would have a viable model of the learner with a given L1, hence a particular interlanguage. The technique is hastily transferred from native speaker applications such as dictation or dialoguing expert systems into the world of EFL with little recognition of the need to make it sensitive to non-native speech. Thus, what one often observes is either disastrous recognition results with highly demotivating end-effects, or the anything-goes principle where any learner input is happily accepted. Both these extremes are thoroughly apedagogical, of course, as noticed by many researchers (e.g. Chen 2001). I can but agree with Ehsani and Knodt (1998:56) at this juncture that "one of the most needed resources for developing open response conversational CALL applications is large corpora of non-native transcribed speech data, of both read and conversational speech".

2.5. The growth of multimedia

'Multimedia' is one of the modern buzz-words, on a par with CD-ROM, SMS, hypertext, DVD, mp3, video-clip, and dozens of others. Few young people in the developed countries would be completely ignorant of it, and most would agree that the term has positive connotations with novelty, movement, sound, colour, fun, etc. It is these connotations that are exploited in the contemporary saturation of CALL with multimedia. CALL, after all, is supposed to be edutainment, it must motivate, it must attract. And what better attraction to a young mind can there be than a full-colour video with good quality sound? Most current CALL packages are built on this premise (one reason why they are expensive to make).

Multimedia has grown gradually. First, (still) pictures were added to sheer text, then sound of initially rather poor quality, then simple animations, finally video. Pronunciation-oriented CALL jumped on each band-wagon soon after they appeared. In the age of CGAs and Hercules graphics no phonetic transcription (or accented letters, for that matter) could be

shown on screen, so simplified systems had to be used[3]. With the first graphics showing articulators in cross-section, vowel diagrams or lip shapes added to text CALL resembled good old pronunciation manuals. With the advent of animation and audio the true era of multimedia began and pronunciation-CALL finally got its added value. Sounds could now be illustrated in various media: in transcription, articulatory diagram or recording. Finally, with the improvements of sound cards, sound recording algorithms, processor speed and memory, sounds could also be visualized as waveforms or (for the more intrepid learners) as spectrograms.

It is this last idea that has become enormously popular among the designers of CALL software and among the less critical users. It is usually implemented in the context of the listen-record-compare task: the learner listens to the model (native-speaker) recording, records his own rendition of the text trying to mimic the original closely, finally compares the two recordings along both channels: aural and visual (example screen-dumps appear below, e.g. [Figure 12](#)). The former – aural comparison – is the traditional method used since the very inception of foreign language learning. The latter is new (motivating element!): the eye is supposed to guide the tongue, to put it metaphorically. While the technique obviously has the required commercial potential, there are serious pedagogical objections to its use (see e.g. Ehsani & Knodt 1998). To enumerate them briefly:

- (a) no two recordings, even of the same person, are exactly acoustically alike,
- (b) no instruction is normally provided on how to align the two waveforms for best result,
- (c) speech tempo and loudness will interfere with the correct reading of the waveform information,
- (d) considerable acoustic knowledge and skill are needed to be able to benefit from comparing waveforms,
- (e) the technique is very sensitive to hardware quality.

This is hardly the end of multimedia development, of course. New ideas and technologies hit the news lines weekly. Some of them have serious ramifications for the future of pronunciation-aware CALL. These will be briefly presented at the end of this paper in the 'science fiction' section.

2.6. Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)

It was at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century that computer hardware reached a stage where it could support speech recognition in real time. This was of course an enormous breakthrough in computer-human communication, which had so far been multimedial in the output, but monomedial (keyboard) in the input (see Aist 1999 for an overview and literature). As mentioned above, ASR was immediately implemented in a number of consumer applications, starting with those where single-word input was sufficient, and gradually spreading to other functionalities, such as dictation, for example. To fully appreciate how complex computer speech recognition is one would have to have a large aside here explaining the intricacies of Hidden Markov Models (HMMs), Fast Fourier Transforms (FFTs), Dynamic Time Warping, and a bunch of other algorithms verging on higher math. The reader is referred to some introductory sources, such as Deroo, Bernstein & Franco 1996 or Cole & Zue 1997. Here, we will briefly concentrate on CALL applications of ASR.

Notice first that the term itself may be a misnomer if it is applied to such functionalities as the mentioned waveform display, for example, or the facility which tries to automatically assess the acoustic fit of the learner-recorded speech with the model (as some of the programs analyzed in section 4. do). No true recognition is required in either process, rather acoustic pattern matching, which is technologically much simpler. For fully-fledged ASR to take place, the software must meaningfully react to the content of the input speech. This meaningful reaction may simply be visualizing speech as computer-readable text on screen, or adjusting the flow of the simulated dialogue according to learner input, for example. This is the current stage which ASR has reached in (the more advanced) CALL, as illustrated below (see *Tell Me More* in 3.6.). Notice that the dialogue is simulated, i.e. the learner can control the flow of the conversation within limits imposed by the ASR algorithm, which will only allow the choice of a few communicatively relevant responses to the computer's recording (a low-perplexity closed-response task for the ASR engine). With no true AI (Artificial Intelligence) in view, the simulation can proceed no further: any attempt to enter into natural conversation with the machine quickly ends in linguistic-communicative disaster, as clearly illustrated by the many 'chatterbots', i.e. chatting robot-like agents on the web (see selection of links on www.chatterbot.tk, for example). ASU (Automatic Speech Understanding), unlike ASR, is still a long way off.

With all these caveats, ASR did give CALL an added measure of face validity. To be able to speak to the machine in the foreign language and have it react in meaningful ways is certainly exciting to most learners, especially to the new generation of children, who take the 'traditional' modes of keyboard communication for granted. Also the speech assessment routines now built into some ASR-equipped CALL can initially be quite thrilling. From them the learner will get the extra metalinguistic feedback on his pronunciation, as if from the teacher. This may initially motivate the learner to actually try harder and pronounce the given sentence again, hoping to push the match indicator to an even higher level. This repetition is no bad thing, of course, as far as it goes. Learners quickly discover, however, that the mechanism can hardly offer robust and detailed evaluation and guidance, as a teacher would: all that can be expected is a global yes/no measure of phonetic achievement, with completely mysterious evaluation criteria and no explanation whatsoever[4]. With the user-customized acceptance threshold set to low, this functionality will accept virtually any spoken input and grade it as good; with high settings even native speakers will have problems getting satisfactory notes. Thus, somewhat analogically to the visual feedback routines discussed earlier, the technique is highly pedagogically questionable at this stage of ASR development (see Chen 2001 for similar conclusions).

3. Pronunciation-oriented CALL software: a sample

Just like the selection of issues in EFL CALL pronunciation in section 2 of this paper, so the choice of software for presentation and analysis is unavoidably fragmentary and subjective. With the line of CALL merchandise now running into hundreds, it could hardly be otherwise. Few comprehensive overviews of (EFL) CALL products exist, also because it is almost impossible to keep pace with the growth of the field: new packages hit the market every week. Finally, serious CALL journals, can only carry a few reviews in every issue, thus sampling a tiny proportion of the whole market. In this situation, the only feasible resource for CALL software information, analysis and advice is the Internet. And indeed, there is CALL info galore on the web, with the characteristically unavoidable disadvantage of uncertain reliability and expertise, volatility, advertising hype, selectiveness, repetition and dispersal. With the practical unavailability of other sources, however, the web remains the best place to go for CALL software research.

In what follows I will briefly present six pronunciation-oriented EFL CALL programs, relating the discussion to the issues discussed in section 2. The programs are listed in the table below.

	Program	Visual feedback	Corrective feedback	Transcription	Focus
1.	<i>Fluency</i> (www.lti.cs.cmu.edu/Research/Fluency)	articulation	syllable and segment	yes	segments
2.	<i>Pronunciation Power</i> (www.englishlearning.com)	waveform, articulation, intonation	segment, intonation	yes	pronunciation
3.	<i>Connected Speech</i> (www.proteatextware.com.au)	intonation	duration/tempo	yes	pronunciation
4.	<i>Better Accent</i> (www.betteraccent.com)	intonation, intensity	none	no	intonation
5.	<i>ISLE</i> (www.educational-concepts.de/pprojects/isle.html)	none	segment, stress	yes	communication
6.	<i>Talk to Me (Tell Me More)</i> (www.auralog.com/en/schools_pro.html)	waveform, articulation, intonation	none	no	communication

Table 1. The programs discussed in the article.

As can be seen from the table, despite the tiny size of the sample, the packages do represent a certain variety along the four dimensions of (a) visual and (b) corrective feedback, (c) transcription use, and (d) general didactic focus. Each one has some www presence in the form of their dedicated websites. They are enjoying a certain amount of critical reviewing attention, as well. The following is not to be construed as actual reviews of the programs, however, as explained earlier.

3.1. *Fluency*

According to the blurb on the *Fluency's* website, "*Fluency* is designed to let you speak, then give you feedback as to how you did – what to correct and how to correct it. Using state-of-the-art speech recognition technology, SPHINX from Carnegie Mellon University, this interactive software allows you to speak, to get corrections, to listen to yourself and a native speaker and try again, over and over, as many times as you want". The website is that of the Language Technologies Institute (<http://www.lti.cs.cmu.edu/index.html>), which does most of its research in machine translation and information retrieval, and *Fluency* appears to be an offshoot of that research. Going a little deeper into the LTI website, we will encounter a slightly more precise description of the *Fluency's* operation: "The system detects pronunciation errors, such as duration mistakes and incorrect phones, and offers visual and aural suggestions as to how to correct them".

As seen in the screenshot in [Figure 1](#), the program's functionalities are rather modest, exactly like stated above. The sagittal cross-section of the vocal tract and the frontal lip view are now practically standard features of EFL (pronunciation-oriented) CALL software (sporting better graphics in most cases). The obscure non-IPA phonetic transcription system, on the other hand is definitely non-standard (even if used in practically all CMU Natural Language Processing (NLP) applications). The segment illustrated, i.e. AX is of course a schwa. Unlike most EFL CALL programs, *Fluency* does try to evaluate and correct the pronunciation of single segments, but the user would be hard-pressed to find out something substantial about the criteria the software is using in the process, so self-correction remains a hit-and-miss procedure.

There is a lot of the declarative-knowledge material in the program: the transcription, the diagrams, the corrective advice are all phrased in the notorious 'descriptive grammar' parlance. The speaking skill component is restricted to simply reading a reply in the simulated dialogue. The learner can also listen to the model utterance, of course, but this would hardly count as a communicative activity, say practicing listening comprehension, because there is effectively none. Neither is there any pretense of a communicative setting, of course, with the short dialogue highly stylized and unnatural.

3.2. Pronunciation Power

Pronunciation Power is marketed by English Computerized Learning Inc. (ECL), which, according to their website, "was founded in 1995 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada [and] operates as a developer and distributor of professional high quality, interactive, multimedia ESL/EFL CALL materials". The package was developed, however, by Blackstone Multimedia Corporation, which is a privately held company also based in Edmonton. It is enough to have a look at their respective websites to appreciate that, unlike in the case of *Fluency*, the *Pronunciation Power 2* package is at the very core of the companies' business, reportedly "used and recommended by over 4000 universities, colleges, businesses and schools worldwide".

Pronunciation Power is designed for over a dozen L1s. It includes a variety of game-like activities and functionalities, such as (a) listen-record-compare, with single words, minimal pairs and full sentences, (b) listening discrimination, (c) vocal-tract cross-section and lip animations ([Figure 2](#)), (d) waveform display and comparison ([Figure 3](#)), (e) STAIR exercises: stress, timing, articulation, intonation, rhythm, (f) a 40-page manual, (g) on-board illustrated audio dictionary of over 7,000 words with a variety of search keys. Thus, it is a large and fully professional package, entirely devoted to pronunciation training, enjoying a considerable commercial success.

With the multitude and variety of material and activities it offers, *Pronunciation Power* is suitable for pronunciation teaching and learning under different conditions and in different settings, thus eminently proving that flexibility is a great asset of CALL. Its coverage, in terms of the canonical pronunciation/phonetics syllabus is large, although fast-speech phenomena and accentual differences of English appear to be underrepresented. The declarative-procedural balance is much better than in *Fluency*, with a lot traditional textual exposition on the one hand (see [Figure 4](#), for example, where heavily technical terminology is used to annotate the diagram), but also the extremely rich skill component containing varied activities for practicing both listening and speaking. In going through the demo of the package, which is freely downloadable from its website, I did not notice any L1-sensitivity beyond the localization of the dictionary. This is, as discussed above, the sad norm in native-made EFL CALL. While the waveform matching technique is used to its limit (with the learner being able to drag-align his recording to better fit the model; see [Figure 3](#)), no attempt is made to automatically evaluate the learner's pronunciation. Considering the criticism I voiced earlier, this is probably to the good of the package. While the system of phonetic transcription used is thoroughly simplified compared to IPA, it is still generally IPA-ish, with ashes, schwas, engs, thetas, and the like[5]. ASR is used for most exercise types, so that there is relatively little keyboard input.

3.3. *Connected Speech*

Connected Speech was made by an Australian firm Protea Textware. Like *Pronunciation Power*, it is an integrated CALL package exhibiting professional design and programming, with noticeably less content, versatility and multimedia interaction, however. From the entry screen (see [Figure 5](#)), the learner can be taken to one of three proficiency levels (starting with lower intermediate) in one of the accentual versions, American, Australian or British English, placed on separate disks. There, he should first listen to a few minutes of video-recorded narrative monologue, whereupon he can enter a suite of tasks and exercises mostly focused on "the suprasegmental features of English, with mark up, recording, practice activities, tests and tutorials. It has speech recognition that gives specific feedback on the suprasegmental features of the learner's production" (from <http://www.proteatextware.com.au/>). As can be seen in [Figure 6](#), separate components are dedicated to such phonetic areas as pause groups, stress, pitch change, linking, segmentals and syllables. More traditional exercises are also included, such as listening comprehension tests prompting the learner to fill in critical vocabulary items from the keyboard, or IPA training.

The program does appear to focus on connected speech, which makes it unique among those under scrutiny here, although the monologues are rather far from the native norm of "natural informal", even at the advanced level, the web blurb notwithstanding.

The pros of *Connected Speech* are: (a) the good balance between the declarative and procedural element, (b) the wide variety of voices, tempos and accents, (c) the skillful use of ASR on all phonetic levels, i.e. for segmentals, pitch, stress and duration, and (d) a well-designed, uncluttered and intuitive user interface. Among the cons one should certainly mention: (a) the rather disappointing use of video to record 'talking heads' only [6], (b) complete L1 insensitivity, and (c) the generally rather uninspired design of the tasks and exercises.

3.4. *Better Accent Tutor*

American-made *Better Accent Tutor* is "pronunciation training software based on instant audio-visual feedback of intonation, stress and rhythm". This is indeed the primary focus of the package: suprasegmentals. The decision to circumscribe the content area so narrowly is supported on the website of the package (http://www.betteraccent.com/papers/quotes_on_pronunciation.htm) with quotes from a number of experts in the field, such as Joan Morley, Marianne Celce-Muria, Joanne Kenworthy, even Alexander Graham Bell! This is very much in the spirit of the communicative language teaching approach, whereby communication is supposed to be maximized even at the

expense of (phonetic) correctness. It is claimed that ill-pronounced individual segments will rarely hamper mutual understanding as much as incorrect prosodies: hence the emphasis on the latter.

The curriculum covered by the Tutor includes: *word stress, simple statements, wh-questions, general questions, repeated questions, alternative questions, tag questions, commands, exclamations, direct address, series of items, long phrases, tongue twisters*. The approach is heavily 'know-that'-oriented, with a lot of 'explanation' carried out in rather dense phonetic jargon; all of these features illustrated in [Figure 7](#). ASR is used to display the learner's pitch (intonation) and intensity (loudness) graph alongside the model ones for visual inspection and comparison. No automatic evaluation is attempted.

With such a narrow focus and modest content, the package must compromise flexibility of application, of course. Notice also that the multimedia technology does not reach beyond audio playback and input, with no graphical animation or video. Likewise, there is no phonetic transcription, articulatory diagrams, waveform comparison or traditional phonetic exercises (cloze, dictation, multiple choice, and the like). Thus, the package projects a rather austere image, as also transpires from the screenshot in [Figure 7](#).

3.5. ISLE

Unlike all the CALL packages so far discussed, the *Interactive Spoken Language Education* (ISLE) was not a privately owned commercial venture, but rather a multinational (German-Italian-British) project, running between 1998 and 2000, heavily subsidized by EC funds, and coordinated by *Educational Concepts*, the R&D department of Ernst Klett Verlag. Three of the partners were universities of Milan, Hamburg and Leeds, which again makes the project unique among those delivering pronunciation-oriented CALL software with a market potential.

According to the website, "The main objective of ISLE is to provide technical solutions to support training of spoken language communication. This will be achieved by developing computer based tools to support the training of speaking skills and by integrating such tools into existing multimedia-based language teaching software systems". The deliverable, however, whose demo can be freely downloaded from the Internet, is a stand-alone package apparently targeted at the busy manager in whom "the social climate of a classroom can easily produce psychological barriers to the training of elementary speaking skills in a foreign language". This can be seen even in the names of the entry screen components, such as "Travel Arrangements", "At the Airport", "In the Office", "At the Hotel" or "In the Restaurant". The content of the whole package, including dialogues, exercises and

glossaries, is also adjusted accordingly. For example, we have a Paolo Rossetti arranging for his business trip to Manchester. The example screenshots all come from this module of the package.

After entering the program the learner must first calibrate the ASR engine by reading a story of the conquest of Mount Everest. This takes a few minutes. Choosing "Travel Arrangements" takes the user into the working area where he should first listen to a (video-less) dialogue between Paolo and a travel agency. The choice is between the captioned and sound-only modes. Then, a suite of tasks can be entered, conveniently divided into text- and pronunciation-based. Among the former, there are true-false ones, based on the dialogue, as well as translation, cloze, Q&A and correct-the-sentence. Interestingly, some of these are L1-sensitive: my demo version of the program happened to be one targeted at the Italian market; hence the prompt to "Thank you for ... with us" is 'volare'.

The "Oral Exercises" section offers read-and-repeat, listen-and-repeat, Q&A, Build the Sentence and Free Choice. The first of these is illustrated in [Figure 8](#), the last but one – in [Figure 9](#). What is of particular interest here is the 'improve' option: when the program decides that the learner mispronounced some sounds (no suprasegmental practice in this package), it offers advice and provides corrective practice, as shown in [Figure 10](#), first kindly asking the learner "How strict should I be?". Upon testing, it turns out – somewhat expectedly – that with the 'strict' setting there is no way to make the ASR wizard satisfied. There is – again not unexpectedly – no guidance on how best to approach the recorded model; it is all the matter of hit-and-miss.

As can be seen from this short description of the functionalities of the package, as well as from the screenshots, despite claims to the effect that the program focuses on natural communication, the tasks are rather traditional, with repetition galore, comprehension questions and phonetic drills. While the learner can listen to a conversation conducted in a natural setting, he cannot himself engage in one in any form. And why should he ever need 'tanks' and 'ants' in the business context (see [Figure 10](#))?

The ASR evaluation of sentences is characteristically unreliable, and the segmental ASR-assisted practice – tedious and unhelpful. The overall balance is in favour of procedural knowledge, with close to no explanation, no (phonetics) manual and no phonetic terminology. IPA transcription is used (sparingly) in the 'improve' menus. No technological gimmicks with waveform display and adjustment are in sight. Generally, with no animation or video movement on the screen, the impression is that it is very traditionally rendered, despite the use of ASR. This, in turn, leads to the guess that the EC funding was not adequate to elaborate the content and function of the program any further.

3.6. *Tell Me More*

Finally, a CALL package where ASR technology has been used most effectively: to actually simulate a spoken dialogue between the learner and the computer. Auralog's *Tell Me More* is heavily advertised on the web as "the reference in foreign language learning, developing all linguistic skills: oral and written expression, comprehension, grammar and vocabulary". As far as pronunciation is concerned, it boasts "the exclusive S.E.T.S. technology (Spoken Error Tracking System) automatically detecting errors in pronunciation" as well as "3D phonetic animations" (see [Figure 11](#)). The program is sold in nine different language (L2) versions, including both British and American English, and three proficiency levels. There are also networked modalities of the software, with functionalities allowing teacher control and class management as well as student-teacher messaging and other tools. In what follows, however, I will describe the 'traditional' CD-ROM-based package.

As mentioned above, in *Tell Me More* the ASR technology is pushed to its current limits:

(a) waveform display, (b) pitch tracking (see [Figure 12](#)), (c) learner input evaluation, (d) dialogue simulation. The latter proceeds by the program offering the learner a few printed options to read off the screen in response to the computer-initiated contextualized dialogue in an authentic setting, e.g. travel arrangements ([Figure 13](#)). The ASR engine tries to figure out which option was actually spoken, and reacts accordingly by responding to this user input. While this is far from an actual conversation, of course, the technique is reasonably robust and very motivating: the learner at last feels that what he says will change the following flow of communicative interchange. As mentioned above (2.6.), to achieve more along this path, ASR would have to feed into a functional AI component with L1 sensitivity and learner modeling. Such packages will not be available for... some time to come.

Tell Me More is definitely balanced towards procedural knowledge, with heavy emphasis on pronunciation (speech communication), although it is hard to make blanket statements for this package which appears on the market in so many different versions: proficiency-, L2-, learner-group-wise (there are dedicated business courses, for example). Even the title of the whole series changed over time, from *Talk to Me* in 1997; some older versions of the package are still available under this title. Unlike *Pronunciation Power* and *Connected Speech*, there is thus much less formal exposition of matters phonetic, no structural division of the program into phonetic fields such as segmentals, stress, intonation, and no phonetic terminology. In these respects *Tell Me More* resembles *ISLE*: speech communication in a naturalistic setting is at the centre of the package. Unlike in *ISLE*, however, the ASR engine does not attempt to identify specific errors in the learner speech input; rather the assessment is global. The acceptance level can be adjusted by the learner himself, with all the disadvantages described above (too strict or too lenient). The program is lavishly illustrated with

good quality photos and videos (in newer versions) and it shows all signs of professional graphics design. While the semi-transparent animation of the articulators (what is called "3D phonetic animations" on the web) may be little more than a gimmick at this stage of human-computer interaction, it does show us a glimpse of things to come in terms of educational applications of virtual reality (see Baldi below).

4. The future of pronunciation-oriented (EFL) CALL

Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) is by far not the last word in human-computer interface design. As mentioned in the introduction, the pace of technological innovation in computer technology generally, and in natural language processing (NLP) in particular, is breathtaking. In this last part of the paper I can only try to briefly speculate about the impact on (EFL) CALL of some recent inventions and developments. Like before, the selection is of course heavily subjective, but – it is hoped – not quite irrelevant for the discussion above.

4.1. Text-to-Speech Synthesis

One area where the impact of technology on CALL is going to be felt soon is that of speech synthesis. Text-to-speech (TTS) synthesis by rule, whereby no previous human recording is necessary in any form, has reached human-like quality (cf. e.g. Dutoit 1997 and 1999). The high-end TTS engines are rather expensive now, and research to improve especially the prosodic properties of synthesized speech are still under way, but the technology is now reaching the stage where it can be applied to CALL, as the synthesized speech can actually function as a model of pronunciation, as well as in the now trite capacity of information deliverer[7].

The added bonus, compared to pre-recorded human speech, is that it is under stringent control of the designer in terms of practically all phonetic criteria: pitch (responsible for the impression of gender), tempo, intonation, timbre of voice, accent, loudness, etc. It would be technically rather easy to simulate a foreign accent, if need arose, for example to better demonstrate to the learner the areas which need improvement (e.g. final devoicing in Polish English). Keller & Zellner-Keller (2000a) note that "speech synthesis allows [...] the creation of sound examples that could not be produced by a human being (e.g., speech with intonation, but no rhythm)".

Because TTS engines are tiny compared to audio recordings, the CD space recovered could be used for other multimedia components of CALL, such as video, for example (see below for video

synthesis). And, naturally, speech synthesis is by far less expensive than recording a team of highly trained human speakers.

4.2. Face animation

One of the most successful applications of cutting-edge computer technology to CALL has been the University of Colorado Center for Spoken Language Understanding (CSLU) "Baldi" project (<http://cslr.colorado.edu/toolkit/main.html>). In brief, it is an NLP environment focused on the use of TTS synthesis and ASR enhanced with the animated face ("Baldi", [Figure 14](#)) simulating phonetically realistic articulatory movements in real time. Visual object programming, speech spectrography and many other components are integrated in the Rapid Application Developer which makes it possible to create a simple dialogue schema in minutes, which can then be build into another application, such as CALL for example (see <http://www.haskins.yale.edu/haskins/heads.html> for a comprehensive interactive overview of many other 'talking head' projects).

What is most exciting in the package (which is free for educational purposes) is the novelty of using the animated face to enhance speech synthesis and make the spoken exchange more realistic. Baldi not only moves his lips and eyes to provide the much needed – especially in the context of learning a foreign language – visual information to aid intelligibility. It can also 'go transparent', exposing the realistically rendered inner articulators in full motion, down to the root of the tongue (see [Figure 15](#)). This is an incredible resource for pronunciation learners, of course: they can listen to natural (if synthesized) speech and see how it originates in the mouth. The head is quasi-3D; it can be rotated in all three dimensions with the mouse, and the amount of transparency can also be adjusted at will, the extreme leaving just the articulators on screen.

The CSLU toolkit, where Baldi lives, has so far been used mostly to assist speech and language therapy of native American children, but its application to EFL CALL (and other L1's – Baldi can be programmed for any language whatsoever) is just a matter of time. Also, it is enough to go to the movies nowadays to see the level of realism which animation of human-like synthetic actors has achieved (e.g. "Shrek" or "Lord of the Rings"; see also Thalmann & Thalmann 1990). In a few short years animated anthropomorphic agents will be used in CALL which will be hard to tell apart from video-recorded real human speakers. One technical consequence of this will be – like with the TTS synthesis – that more CD space will be freed from the enormously memory-hungry current video files. It is much harder to predict learner reactions to (semi-intelligent) speaking and animated human-like agents acting as conversation partners in settings which are now only available in video

conferencing. Learners may relate to these artificial personas to the extent which may be pedagogically relevant, with both its pros and cons.

4.3. Multimodal man-machine communication

For truly multimodal human-machine interaction the machine would have to progress beyond simple (?) ASR – into the realm of automatic recognition of audiovisual speech. The AI TTSS ASR agent would be able to recognize and act upon (at least) the facial expressions of the computer user. This would not only aid communication generally through taking advantage of gaze, eye-brow movement, head positioning, and the like, but also – in the context of pronunciation teaching – make it possible to provide additional articulatory feedback to the learner concerning his lip position and movement in labial(ized) sounds, tongue-tip control in apico-dental fricatives or labio-dental contact in /f/ or /v/. Of course, to achieve this level of video sensitivity highly sophisticated systems would have to be employed. Contemporary prototypes are nowhere near the required technological stage (see [Figure 16](#) for a simple example). The area is full of vibrant research activity, however (see e.g. Granström, House & Karlsson 2002, or Scott 2001 for an accessible introduction), and the feeling is that we can expect significant breakthroughs quite soon.

4.4. Machine Translation (MT)

Machine translation might at first sight appear not to belong here, in a paper where pronunciation-oriented (EFL) CALL is discussed. It is indeed true that MT is seldom used in this context, even though one can envisage its creative applications in a grammar class, for example, where learners would try to induce the rules of the foreign language from the (usually risible) characteristic errors of an MT package. However, the impact of speech-enabled, or Speech-to-Speech (StS) MT, once it is perfected, can be enormous, not only for the business of pronunciation instruction, but for the whole world of foreign language teaching (FLT) and learning. In the words of Crystal (2001:227): "We can also envisage the translating telephone, where we speak into a phone, and the software carries out the required speech recognition, translation, and speech synthesis, enabling the listeners to hear our speech in their own language [...] Such a world is, of course, a very long way off". It is enough to have a look at Ectaco's web pages (<http://www.ectaco.com/>) to appreciate that the envisaged world has already arrived: while the Russian company's translator is still rather primitive (in terms of device size, range of languages translated, vocabulary size, noise robustness, etc.) it does translate speech to speech in real time with quality quite adequate for a tourist or businessman ordering a meal in a

restaurant or air tickets in a travel agency. Thus, I believe, Crystal's "way-off" nightmare is more immediately threatening than he ever thought: "in a world where it is possible to translate automatically from any one language into any other, we have to face up to the issue of whether people will be bothered to learn foreign language at all" (ibidem; see also Cribb 2000 for similar conclusions).

5. Conclusions

With the currently fashionable 'focus on form' in foreign language teaching (EFL in particular; see, for example, Doughty & Williams 1998 or Ellis 2001) the role of pronunciation-oriented CALL software is bound to grow in the process of phonetics teaching and learning, both in the classroom context and outside it. Teachers will delegate onto computers some of the more tedious tasks involved, such as drilling as one technique of skill-getting. It seems that the unconstrained smoothly-flowing spoken foreign-language dialogue with the computer will not become reality for some time to come. So, until computer AI improves significantly, truly communicative activities will not be used as a vehicle for practicing pronunciation. But at least there is a chance that the employment of (EFL-aware) speech recognition, text-to-speech synthesis and certain elements of artificial intelligence will gradually transform the boring phonetic 'drill-and-kill' procedure into an exciting, multimedia, interactive 'drill-and-thrill' adventure.

The audio channel of communication between human and machine, which is now opening, both in FLT and outside it, is an additional boost for the growing anthropomorphization of the computer. After all, with which other creatures, natural or artificial, can we communicate by voice? The computer will unavoidably grow its own persona around it. The FLT learner will take it more and more for granted that he can intelligently communicate with this persona in the foreign language. He will react to it more and more on the affective level, as well as intellectually. He will like it, or hate it, as the case may be. He will look to it for help, advice, praise and criticism. He will count on its inherent intelligence and wisdom. What impact this attitude will have on foreign language learning and teaching remains to be discovered. My guess is that it will be enormous.

Notes

1. This text is based on my lecture to the SCE Foreign Language College (<http://www.nkjo.szczecin.pl/>) in Szczecin on January 16th 2003. While the overall organization reflects that of the lecture, the text is of course not a mirror image of the latter, if only because it cannot contain the rich multimedia content presented in the College. The original text was written in April 2003. Due to adverse circumstances its publication in Szczecin has been suspended. I believe, however, that the main theses of this paper remain in force. Links to respective web pages were checked and updated 15 December 2004. Otherwise, with very minor editorial changes, the text appears in its original form. I am grateful to Dr. Jarek Krajka for offering TEwT as the venue for its publication.
2. In this context a multitude of books (e.g. Jenkins 2000), articles (e.g. Sobkowiak 2003) and conferences (e.g. LM34's workshop on LFC: <http://elex.amu.edu.pl/ifa/plm/2003/index.htm>) might be invoked.
3. Somewhat paradoxically, as early as at the beginning of 1980s Sinclair's ZX Spectrum could (with pains) flash user-designed IPA on the TV screen, which functioned as its VDU (Video Display Unit).
4. This may not be true of some speech assessment and practice software mostly used in the (native-language) clinical setting. This is, however, usually rather narrowly targeted at, say vowel quality, whereby the user is trying to match vowel formant positions in two-dimensional diagrams with the model ones.
5. The shape of TH is somewhat nonstandard, though: /d/.
6. Even if "experiments have shown that a visual display of the talker improves not only word identification accuracy [...], but also speech rhythm and timing" (Ehsani & Knodt 1998:52).
7. See *Filoglossia*, a CALL package with Greek as a foreign language, which already employs TTS synthesis: http://www.ilsp.gr/filoglossia_plus_eng.html, or WordPilot from <http://www.compulang.com>, which also has this feature.

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LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CULTURE: AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ON THE WEB

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"Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted... Culture...is the foundation of communication.

(Samovar, Porter & Jain, 1981: 24)

1. Introduction: Language teaching and culture

The importance of teaching culture in teaching languages has been recognised and widely discussed over the last two centuries. These discussions have drawn language teachers' attention to the fact that languages do not exist in separation from culture and that knowledge of culture holds a key to understanding of a language.

Recently this interconnection between language and culture have been explored, among many others, by such ethnographers as Ochs and Schieffelin, Poyatos and Peters and Boggs (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984, Poyatos, 1985, Peters and Boggs, 1986; as quoted in Lessard-Clouston, 1997). Buttjes (1990) summarises the reasons behind this close relationship as follows:

1. language acquisition does not follow a universal sequence, but differs across cultures;
2. the process of becoming a competent member of society is realized through exchanges of language in particular social situations;
3. every society orchestrates the ways in which children participate in particular situations, and this, in turn, affects the form, function and content of children's utterances;
4. caregivers' primary concern is not with grammatical input, but with the transmission of sociocultural knowledge;
5. the native learner, in addition to language, acquires also the paralinguistic patterns and the kinesics of his or her culture (Buttjes, 1990: 55; after Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

Having acknowledged this close relationship between language and culture and the necessity of teaching culture while teaching languages, there arise two questions: what is culture and what methods should be deployed to teach culture through language (or language through culture) successfully.

2. Defining culture for language teaching

Michael Lessard-Clouston (1997) attempts to define culture for the purpose of ESL teachers, although the task is not an easy one as definition of a national culture denies pluralism and the concept is inherently complex. He finds the four descriptors for meanings of culture by Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi (1990: 3-4) as most helpful to language teachers:

- a) the aesthetic aspect, which includes the arts (cinema, literature, music and media);
- b) the sociological aspect, which refers to the organization and nature of family, interpersonal relations, customs, material conditions, etc.;
- c) the semantic sense, which encompasses the whole conceptualization system which conditions perceptions and thought processes;
- d) the pragmatic or sociolinguistic sense, which refers to the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills and language code which are necessary for successful communication.

Finally, he highlights the dynamic aspect of culture as stated by Robinson (1988), who sees culture as a dynamic "system of symbols and meanings" where "past experience influences meaning, which in turn affects future experience, which in turn affects subsequent meaning, and so on" (Robinson, 1988: 11, as quoted in Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

3. Strategies for teaching culture

Understanding the general and specific aspects of culture and its dynamic character should help educators in developing appropriate strategies for teaching it. Galloway (1985, as quoted in Hadley, 2001: 348) warns about the commonly used "Facts Approaches" to teaching culture, which result from poor preparation of teachers for teaching culture:

- a) "The Frankenstein Approach": A taco from here, a flamenco dancer from here, a Gacho from here, a bullfight from there;
- b) "The 4-F Approach": folk dances, festivals, fairs and food;
- c) "The Tour Guide Approach": monuments, rivers, cities, etc;
- d) "The 'By-The-Way' Approach: sporadic lectures or bits of behavior selected indiscriminately to emphasize sharp differences

For a comprehensive insight into the strategies and approaches to teaching culture interested teachers can be referred to Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein & Colby (2001). An in-depth analysis of these methods and techniques is beyond the scope of this article, but the following observations may fulfill the immediate, pragmatic needs of a teacher unsure about the ways the subject should be tackled in his/her language lessons, that, first of all, teaching culture requires careful planning, secondly, that the goals are shifting away from learning of cultural facts and, finally, that culture learning should be assessed.

Lessard-Clouston (1997) stresses the importance of planning for culture teaching by saying: "Just as we are intentional in terms of what grammatical structures we teach and how, we must also be systematic about our culture teaching" (Lessard-Clouston, 1997, paragraph 24). Such careful planning can be achieved, for example, through an application of Moran's chart called "A framework for learning/teaching culture" (Moran, 1992):

Aspect A : Knowing about (getting information)	Aspect B : Knowing how (developing behaviors)
Nature of content: getting information - what is the capital of the US? - sports in American life. Learning objectives: demonstrate a mastery of	Nature of content: skills - buying tickets to a sports event, - cheering for your team at a football game, Learning objectives: demonstrate an ability (a

<p>the information. Techniques/activities: cultural readings; films/videotapes; recordings; realia (cultural artifacts); personal anecdotes. Teacher role: informant</p>	<p>fluency, an expertise, confidence) Techniques/activities: dialogs, role plays, simulations, field experiences. Teacher role: coach or model.</p>
<p>Aspect C: Knowing why (discovering explanations)</p>	<p>Aspect D: Knowing oneself (personalizing knowledge)</p>
<p>Nature of content: values and assumptions - why are sports so important to Americans? - are you making an observation or an interpretation? - how does this compare with your culture? Learning objectives: critical thinking - demonstrate an ability: to infer; to generalize; to suspend judgment, - curiosity; tolerance; sensitivity; empathy. Techniques/activities: - learners interpret and make explanations based on above activities, - comparisons with their own culture, - ethnography, - reflective writing. Teacher role: co-researcher or guide</p>	<p>Nature of content: self-awareness - what importance do sports have in YOUR life? Learning objectives: by behavior/statements demonstrate understanding of ones' feelings, values, opinions, attitudes, and act upon them. Techniques/activities: - learners examine and make statements about themselves, - reflective writing, - feedback on above activities. Teacher role: counselor or guide.</p>

Figure 1. Partick Moran's framework for learning/teaching culture.

Teaching culture should not be just memorization of cultural facts but should aim for the acquisition of "interactional competence" (a term suggested by Allen and Moore at the 1996 culture conference in Minneapolis) and learning how to learn about culture. According to Paige (Paige et.al, 2001: 5), such learning would include:

1. learning about the self as a cultural being,
2. learning about culture and its impact on human communication, behavior, and identity,
3. culture-general learning, i.e., learning about universal, cross-cultural phenomena such as cultural adjustment,
4. culture-specific learning, i.e., learning about a particular culture, including its language, and,
5. learning how to learn, i.e., becoming an effective language and culture learner.

As any aspect of learning, culture learning should be assessable: "Culture learning assessment has been neglected in L2/FL education, and this is something that must be addressed if we are to enable students to truly understand and profit from this aspect of their L2/FL classes." (Lessard-Clouston, 1997, paragraph 25).

4. Australian language and culture on the World Wide Web

The Web offers wealth of materials to help language teachers "teach" culture in their classes. These materials can be divided into those concerned with the theories and principles of teaching culture, authentic cultural materials (or raw materials) and ESL/CALL materials such as lesson plans, exercises, webquests and many others.

The following annotated links are a collection of "Australiana on the Web" – a list of quality raw materials and ESL activities, which ESL/CALL teachers may find useful in creating their own lessons devoted to Australian culture.

4.1. Native Australians

Australia, the country and the continent, has always been a mysterious and exotic place to many people from around the world. It's native custodians are Australian Aboriginals, who have been developing their culture, their many languages (about 500 in fact) and their relationship with the harsh natural surrounding for over 40 000 years.

Raw Materials:

Aboriginal Art and Culture Centre online: <http://www.aboriginalart.com.au>.

This site is owned and operated by Australian Aboriginals from the Red Centre: Alice Springs region of Australia. Contains art gallery with traditional and contemporary art examples.

Didgeridoo and the role of music: <http://www.aboriginalart.com.au/didgeridoo/>. Didgeridoo is a traditional Aboriginal instrument, which you can view, hear and even learn to play with this site.

Aboriginal Dreaming stories (with videos and audios):

<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/dreaming/storylist.htm>. Storytelling is an integral part of life for Indigenous Australians. Dreaming stories tell about the origins of the world, people and nature and teach the rules of living.

Aboriginal Australia today: http://www.ozshots.com/aboriginals/index_eng.html. This important website provides an honest account of the lives of Australian Aboriginals today, which is quite far from the common, romantic imagery presented on many other sites.

ESL Activities:

Australian Aboriginals: <http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/aboriginals.htm> Pre-Intermediate, Reading: scanning for information. A web-hunt activity designed to gather basic facts about Australian Aboriginals.

4.2. White settlement and migration

White settlement and the subsequent waves of migration to Australia (gold rush, post-war, and refugees) has changed Australia's ethnic make-up and resulted in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society which performs strong economically and, considering its small population of 20 million people, rates high among the developed nations in the world.

Raw Materials

About Australia: <http://www.about-australia.com/> (you will get greeted with the famous "G'day" there). General information is travel, business, news, weather, lifestyle and shopping.

ESL Activities

A Migrant Experience: <http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/migrantexp.htm>. Pre-Intermediate, Listening: for detail. This is a listening activity based on an interview with a post-war Austrian migrant.

Migrants - where are they from? http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/migrant_origins.htm. Upper Intermediate, Reading/Vocabulary: interpreting data. This page contains the Australian Government statistics on Australian migration from 1901-1996. The activity (useful for IELTS test preparation) requires students to interpret the data in the graphic form.

Gold Rush in Australia - Sovereign Hill. <http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/sovereign.htm>. Pre-Intermediate, Reading: scanning for information. This simple web-hunt activity is designed for pre-intermediate students wishing to find out more about the Gold Rush era in Victoria, Australia and prepare for a visit to an outdoor Museum in Sovereign Hill.

Women on the Goldfields: <http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/women1.htm>. Intermediate: Reading: for facts, Speaking: an opinion, Writing: punctuation. This activity engages students in analysing and comparing lives of men and women in the gold fields. It also suggests a punctuation activity with a word processor based on the texts read.

Ned Kelly: <http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/nedkelly.htm>. Intermediate: Reading: for details, Writing: paraphrasing. This activity draws students' attention to the skill of paraphrasing through note-taking from reading. It is based on the real-life story of a famous Australian outlaw, Ned Kelly.

4.3. Australians and sport

Australians are well-known for their love of sport, which sometimes borders with obsession. Their love for the beach, for example, is reflected in their world-class achievements in swimming and surfing, while the love for outdoor activities makes them good at cricket, tennis and grass hockey. They love their "footy" (Australian Rules Football) and their rugby.

ESL Activities

The Aussie Cozzie: <http://beach.prace.vic.edu.au/stories/togs.php>. Pre-Intermediate, Reading: picture story and online exercises. "When Europeans first invaded Australia, the only people here who were good at swimming were the Aboriginal people..." This picture story is followed by interactive comprehension exercises.

Beach Safety signs: <http://beach.prace.vic.edu.au/info/safety-signs.php>. Pre-Intermediate, Speaking: beach signs, Reading: safety rules and online exercises. These elementary language exercises are designed to teach beach safety signs and rules to pre-intermediate ESL students.

Life Savers at Bondi Beach: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~prace/beach/bondi.htm>. Intermediate, Reading comprehension and online exercises. "Bondi Beach is a very famous beach in Sydney. Bondi started the first surf lifesaving club in the world. Surf Life Saving Organisations now operate in 26 countries around the world". This picture story is followed by a number of interactive exercises.

4.4. Australian English

Australian English has its distinctive features: its unique slang and vocabulary, often incorporates Aboriginal languages, especially for naming places and natural phenomena. Shortening of words and diminutives is also quite popular and confuses other English speakers.

Raw materials

Australian English: <http://eleaston.com/aus-eng.html>. This site is a collection of web resources about Australian English.

ESL Activities

Australian Slang: <http://homepage.powerup.com.au/~ozesl/quiz3.html>. This is an online multiple-choice quiz based on Australian slang.

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4.5. Australian Art

Australian art is often associated with the traditional art of Australian Aboriginals, but Australians can be proud of many other artists, especially in the area of cinematography and acting. Painters Boyd, Namatjira, McCubbin, Roberts, Streeon, Nolan, Drysdale and Dobellare are well-loved for their depictions of Australian landscapes and the Australian way of life in the last century. Singers Dame Melba and Dame Joan Sutherland put Australia on the opera map of the world.

Raw Materials

Web-arts Australia: <http://www.web-arts.com.au/AART.html>. List of Australian painters with images of their paintings.

CD Collector: <http://www.cdcollector.com.au/>. This site lists CDs of Australian composers, singers, bands and orchestras.

4.6. Native plants and animals

When you think "Australia", you may think immediately of kangaroos and koalas. These marsupials (which grow their young in pouches) and many other species of fauna and flora have developed to fill specific niches of the Australian nature. Most of these 140 species of marsupials in Australia are found nowhere else in the world. Isolation and a harsh environment have also resulted in unique Australian flora.

Raw Materials

Australian Animals: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/coloring/Australia.shtml>. This site provides pictures of Australian animals, with colour-in versions for younger learners.

Kookaburra song: <http://www.whatsthenumber.com/oz/unique/song9.htm>. This is a children song about Kookaburra, called also "the laughing bird". Lyrics and music provided.

Australian Flora: <http://www.austemb.org/flora.htm>. This site provides an overview of the most common native Australian flora.

Australian 12 Days of Xmas: <http://walelia.users1.50megs.com/carol.html>. This song is a re-make of the well-known Christmas song, replacing traditional words with those depicting Australian fauna and flora

ESL Activities

Dangerous Sea Creatures: <http://beach.prace.vic.edu.au/info/danger.php>. Intermediate, reading comprehension and online exercises. Australian seas are full of dangerous creatures. This site provides reading comprehension activities about these creatures.

Snakes Alive: <http://pageturners.prace.vic.edu.au/snakes-alive>. Elementary, reading: picture story and comprehension exercises. This picture story teaching about dangerous snakes in Australia is followed by online comprehension exercises.

4.7. Australian holidays

Santa comes to Australia in the middle of the summer season. He sweats in his suit and does his best to re-create the Christmas spirit. Then comes January when white Australians celebrate the landing of the first convict fleet in 1787. This date however is seen as a year of

the "white invasion" by Australian Aboriginals. Other public holidays in Australia include Queen's Birthday and the ANZAC Day which is a day to remember those who died in wars.

Raw materials

Australian Xmas – Australian version of "Jingle Bells":

<http://users.tpg.com.au/sharenet/c/jinglebells.html>. This site provides a full "translation" of the Australian version of the Jingle Bells song from Australian to English.

ESL Activities

Australia Day Holiday: <http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/AusDay.htm>. Intermediate: Reading comprehension, Writing a postcard. This site is a web-hunt type activity based around the topic of Australia Day Holiday: its origins and the way it is being celebrated.

4.8. Australian food

Australians love their food and experiment with it quite a lot. They love alfresco dining and in one street can find restaurants and eateries serving food from many different countries. However, there are a few specifically Australian food items: vegemite spread, Lamington cakes, ANZAC Biscuits and Pavlova.

Vegemite is considered as much a part of Australia's heritage as kangaroos and the Holden cars. It is actually an Australian obsession and has become a unique and loved symbol of the Australian nation. A published paper entitled "Vegemite as a Marker of National Identity" by Paul Rozin & Michael Siegal the best indication of vegemite's importance to Australians.

Raw materials

Vegemite: <http://www.whatsthenumber.com/oz/unique/vegemite.htm>. This site gives a brief history of Vegemite, information of its nutritional value and also lyrics and the tune to the advertising jingle on Vegemite, called "Happy Little Vegemites".

Australian Food and Drink: <http://www.whatsthenumber.com/oz/unique/words1c.htm>. This site provides a list of Australian slang words on food and drink.

4.9. Australian songs

Australian spirit, pride and mateship are reflected in many songs. Australians are globetrotters and many take time off study or work to see the world, with Asia and Europe being most popular destinations. Feeling a bit isolated, they want to "see the world out there". Through songs Australians can express their love for the country, its people and its nature. The song "I still call Australia home" is a beautiful tribute to this country and its people.

Raw Materials

National Anthem "Advance Australia Fair": <http://www.genesis.net.au/%7Eantheams/aaf.html>.

Aussie Songs for Kids: http://www.gigglepotz.com/f_songs8.htm.

"I still call Australia home" (video): http://www.ausgirlschoir.com.au/highlights_qantas.htm.

Australian songs lyrics: <http://www.whatsthenumber.com/oz/unique/song10.htm>.

ESL Activities

Unofficial anthem "Waltzing Matilda":

<http://members.optushome.com.au/renatachylinski/matilda/index.htm>. All about the song and its authors with numerous language activities.

Conclusion

The present article aimed at giving a brief overview of the changing approaches to teaching culture and language over the last decades. It also suggested some practical strategies for planning for teaching culture in an ESL environment.

The second part of this article is devoted to two types of resources about Australian culture and language available on the World Wide Web. These are authentic, or raw, web materials and ESL or CALL web-based activities. It is hoped that this annotated list of resources will encourage language teachers to introduce their students to the rich and exciting culture of Australia.

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Acknowledgement

The materials of the following CALL teachers have been used for this review:

1. Melinda Gleeson, whose OZ ESL Online (<http://homepage.powerup.com.au/~ozesl/#QUIZZES>) was one of the first ESL Australiana pages published on the Web;
2. Renata Chylinski, Stephen Lock and Jennifer Coster produced many web-based activities published on Monash University CALL website (<http://lstation.monint.monash.edu.au/web/index.htm>);
3. Anne Dunn, Chris Malakar and Moira Hanrahan produced many Australian-related online activities for beginner learners at Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (a non-profit community learning organization), <http://prace.vic.edu.au/>.

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INTERNET LESSON PLANS

USING LIMERICKS TO PRACTISE THE RHYTHM OF ENGLISH

by **Bernadine McCreesh**

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Level: grade 6 to adult

Time: a minimum of one class-period, but can be increased by doing the optional activities

Aims:

- to acquaint students with the rhythm of English (recurring stressed and unstressed syllables)
- to give students practice in producing stressed and unstressed syllables
- to acquaint students with an English verse-form used for non-serious purposes
- to give students practice in scanning texts for specific information and in reading carefully once the information has been located.

Resources/ materials:

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limerick_\(poetry\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limerick_(poetry)) (encyclopedia article with facts about limericks)
2. <http://www.harbeck.ca/Reg/limerick.html> (enables students to write their own limericks)
3. <http://www.math.fsu.edu/~mesterto/Unscramble/limericks.html> (limericks, some of which require knowledge of idioms and English culture and are suitable for advanced classes)
4. <http://www.freewebs.com/grahamlester/classics.htm> (many based on word-play and suitable for advanced classes)
5. http://theblarneywell.com/silly_limericks.htm (mainly about animals, suitable for younger students)
6. <http://home.earthlink.net/~kristenaa/nice/> (30 pages of limericks, some of which do not scan)

Possible problems:

1. Many limericks are dirty or indecent. For this reason, it is not advisable to ask teenage students to type *limericks* into a search-engine. They will probably enjoy what they find, and they will undoubtedly increase their knowledge of slang and colloquial English quite considerably, but you may end up in trouble with parents and school-principals if the youngsters recite bawdy limericks at home.
2. For the same reason, limit the amount of time students are given to find the answers to the questions on Worksheet One and/or correct as soon as the first pair has found the right answers.
3. Activity c) in the pre-stage can be carried out only in classes in which students have room to circulate.

Procedure

Before class. Go to the last four websites in the list above and find limericks which would be suitable for your class. If you have between 26 and 30 students, you will need six limericks; if you have between 21 and 25, you will need five, and so on. In large type, print out the limericks double-spaced and then cut them up into lines.

For the optional activity, take another limerick and cut it up into phrases, three for lines 1, 2, 5 and two for lines 3 and 4. Make as many copies as there are groups in the class.

1. Pre-stage

- a) Ask students if they know what a limerick is. Put an example on the board or overhead projector. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud. The students are usually struck by the rhythm. Ask them to define/describe a limerick--number of lines, rhyme-scheme, rhythm.
- b) At this point, you may wish to do one or more of the activities found in the worksheets below, depending on the students' level and the time available.
- c) Give out the cut-up limericks, one line per student. Any left-over lines can be placed on the teacher's desk for consultation. (Make sure that the left-over lines are all from different limericks.) The students walk around the room trying to find the people who have the other lines of their limerick. Then they rearrange the lines to make the limerick, taking missing lines from the teacher's desk if necessary. Completed limericks can be written on the board, written on sheets of paper and posted on the walls, or recited to the rest of the class.
- d) (Optional activity) Give each group the chopped up limerick and ask them to reassemble it. (This activity takes less time than you would expect.)
- e) Give a copy of Worksheet One to each group of five (or less) students. In their groups, students try to come to a consensus on what the right answers are to the questions on the worksheet. (5 minutes maximum.) In the meantime, the teacher draws the following chart on the board (assuming there are five groups) and gives a copy of the chart to a student if the class is not taking place in the computer lab.

Question/Group	1	2	3	4	5
A					
B					
C					
D					
E					

The teacher asks each group for their answer and records the answers on the chart. The student does the same thing on his/her chart.

2. While-stage (30 min)

a) The students now are divided into pairs and go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limerick_\(poetry\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limerick_(poetry)).

They are given 5-10 minutes to try to find the answers to the questions on Worksheet One. When the time is up, the teacher corrects the worksheets with the class. The scores are then tallied to see which team had guessed the most correct answers.

b) The students then go to <http://www.harbeck.ca/Reg/limerick.html> and answer the questions on Worksheet Two. Sheets can be corrected in class or handed in at the end of the class.

c) Using one sentence/phrase from each line, each pair makes up the **most sensible** limerick they can and gives it a title.

Using one sentence/phrase from each line, they then make up the **silliest** limerick they can and give it a title.

3. Post-stage (5 min.)

a) Write out/Print out the limericks. Students write their names on the back of the sheets. Post the sheets on the wall under *Sensible Limericks* or *Silly Limericks*. The class votes for the best limerick in each category.

Note

If you are using this lesson-plan primarily for pronunciation-practice, the compound nouns found in the answers *sweetheart*, *bluejay*, *hearsay*, *heartburn* are excellent for introducing or practising primary/secondary stress and the up-down intonation patterns found on compound nouns at the end of a sentence.

e.g. □SWEET□

□heart

WORKSHEETS

Worksheet One

-

1. Limericks are called *limericks* because they were first written in the town of Limerick, in Ireland.

 a) definitely true b) probably true c) probably false d) definitely false

2. The first poem in limerick form is thought to have been written approximately when?

a) 1400 b) 1600 c) 1750 d) 1900

3. When was the word *limerick* first used to describe this type of poem?

a) in the early fourteenth century b) at the start of the seventeenth century

c) in the eighteenth century d) in the last decade of the nineteenth century

4. Who popularised the form?

a) William Shakespeare b) Tom o' Bedlam c) Edward Lear d) Ogden Nash

5. Approximately how many limericks did this person write?

a) 200 b) 500 c) 1,000 d) 5,000

Worksheet Two

1. Go to line 1.

a) Find a word which means *boyfriend, girlfriend*.

b) Find the names of two birds.

2. Go to line 2.

a) Find a word which means *stories, rumours*.

b) Find a word for something you ride on in the snow.

c) Find an expression which means *sex*. [(Omit with younger students.)]

3. Go to line 3.

a) Find a word for an ingredient in granola. [or porridge]

b) Find a word or expression which means *excellent*.

c) Find an expression which means *became fiancés*.

4. Go to line 4.

a) Find a word which means *partner, companion*.

b) Find a word which means *ate too much*.

c) Find an expression which means *becoming...heavier*.

5. Go to line 5.

a) Find a word which means *no*.

b) Find a word which means *became excited*.

c) Find a word which means *indigestion, a burning sensation in the stomach*.

6. Now find the name(s) of

a) a town in the U.S.

b) a city in India

c) a country in the Near East

d) two places in Canada

NOTE 1: Whitehorse and Yellowknife exist in Canada, but not Yellowhorse.

NOTE 2. These words have been chosen with French-speaking students in mind.

You may wish to add more words or use different ones.

Optional Worksheets

I. Fill in the blanks

asked balanced fell floor fork

once peas pork schoolboy slices

I _____ met a _____ in York,

Who _____ his _____ on his _____.

When they _____ on the _____,

He _____ for some more,

To go with his _____ of _____.

-

II. Fill in the blanks (focus on grammar)

(With this exercise, you can either dictate the limerick or leave the students to figure out the words themselves depending on their level.)

_____ Halloween _____ Quebec,

_____ man _____ outside _____ deck,

When _____ surprise

_____ dropped _____ skies,

_____ vampire _____ made _____ neck.

(Cultural note: in North America, houses are often decorated for Halloween (October 31) with pumpkins, witches, spiders, spiders' webs, gravestones, skeletons, etc. Vampires also belong to this tradition.)

Original limerick:

One Halloween in Quebec,
A man was outside on his deck,
When to his surprise
There dropped from the skies,

A vampire which made for his neck.

III. Scrambled Limericks (Advanced)

Instructions: The lines in the following limericks have gotten into the wrong poem. Rearrange them so that the limericks make sense. Line 2 should stay as the second line, line 3 as the third line, etc., but in a different limerick.

There was a young scholar called Cy,
On her neighbours she wanted to spy.
To the pilot she said,
The embarrassed cook fled,
And hanged his own self with his tie.

A farmer decided on Skye,
But something went strangely awry.
She hid in the shed,
With a pain in her head,
Great knowledge they seemed to imply.

A certain young lady called Di
To give matrimony a try.

The books that he read,
She blushed brilliant red,
And the doctor came past by and by.

One day a good cook made a pie.
Whose marks were abnormally high.
She took to her bed,
Oh dear Captain Fred,
Thus they caught the old woman so sly.

There was a young lady called Vi,
Decided she wanted to fly.
When the time came to wed,
The things that he said,
And the guests threw it out with a sigh.

There was an old lady from Rye,
Who was so abnormally shy,
The crust was like lead.
But they found her instead.
I'd love to see earth from the sky.

A nosey old woman did pry.
Who was sure she was going to die.
If one word she said,
He clean lost his head,

And looked 's if she wanted to cry.

WORLD WIDE AUDIENCE – CREATIVE WRITING ON THE NET

by **Gavin Dudeney**

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Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 2 x 45 minutes

Aims:

- To improve IT and reading skills
- To revise and extend a wide variety of lexical and grammatical structures
- To provide practice in creative writing, group work, negotiation, etc.

Resources/ materials: <http://www.ryman-novel.com> and a worksheet

Possible problems: This is a Net-based novel for native English speakers. As such, it has plenty of low-frequency items of vocabulary unfamiliar at this level. Either deal with it as you would normally, or give learners a link to a good online dictionary.

Procedure

1. Pre-stage (10 min)

It is important here, when working with students – AND before doing the first activity - to go through the structure of the site together – pointing out the basic navigation options and looking at how each character is structured:

- The person's name
- His/Her outward appearance (clothes, physical description, etc)
- His/Her inside information (job, lifestyle, etc)
- What s/he is doing or thinking
- His/Her relationship with other passengers in the carriage

2. While-stage (20 min)

Once this has been done – and everyone is comfortable with the notion, the worksheet below can be given out, and students can work through the 10 questions on the sheet.

Have your students do this first part, then go through it looking at the answers. They should have no problem with this as it is merely a case of following hyperlinks between characters. If you have more advanced students, consider making the task a little more demanding.

Should you not have access to computers connected to the Net you can – as a last resort – print out the fifteen characters involved, assign one to each student and have them go around the class asking each other general questions until they find the connections. This is, however, far more demanding and does reduce the impact of the novel considerably.

3. Post-stage (15 min)

In part two, take a closer look at how each character is put together. The sections adopted by the author apply very nicely in an ELT context. Each character has a name and a number to identify him/her, then three sections giving more information about them.

These three sections have a lot of scope within the classroom, and can be exploited on many levels from simple lexical fields such as colours, clothes, physical descriptions, etc. to more complex grammatical issues such as past tenses and connectors.

Each student now works on his/her own to produce a character (if you have access to the Net, consider finding some photos of people to use). They should follow the same structure as the 253 site.

4. Lesson Two (45 min)

Once they have created their character, get them into small groups to share what they have written.

At this point they should negotiate with the other people in their group and re-write parts of their characters in order to be able to link them with the other characters in the group. Repeat this activity in larger groups until all the characters in the class are linked in some way.

The final activity involves making a small version of the 253 story. This can be done in a low-tech manner, with students creating their final project as a wall poster, linking the characters with lines, or whatever. The high-tech way is to make them as a set of basic webpages and put them up on the Net on one of the free web hosting sites – this gives the students much more satisfaction and also the opportunity of showing their work to a much wider audience. Information on basic web design and web hosting issues can be found in Part C of Dudeney (2000).

Note

A longer version of this article is available for download from
<http://www.dudeney.com/downloads/WorldWideAudience.rtf>.

Reference

Dudeney, G. (2000). *The Internet and The Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WORKSHEET

253

a novel for the Internet about London Underground in seven cars and a crash

253 is an interactive novel written for, and published on the Internet. There are seven tube (underground train) carriages full of passengers whose lives are inter-related.

We're going to look at car one. Work with a partner and see if you can find the answers to the following ten questions:

1. Where do you think Harry Migson and Lisa Jabokowski met?
2. Which passenger is wearing gold earrings?
3. Which company do Edward Gossart and Adele Driscoll work for?
4. Jason Laveridge went to a good school - which one?
5. What's wrong with Richard Tomlinson? Who shares his secret?
6. Who is a stand-up comic? What is her sister's name?
7. Who used to buy wine from Tony Mannocchi?
8. Who plays piano on a cross-channel ferry? Who works with him and what does he do?
9. Who hasn't got anywhere to live?
10. What's the connection between the driver and Ibrahim Gurer?

Answers: 1. They both work in a market, 2. Deborah Payne, Passenger 3, 3. Lloyd's Bank, 4. St. Paul's School, 5. He is very ill AND Tristan Sawyer, Passenger 235, 6. Danni Jarret, Passenger 27 AND Suze Morley, Passenger 99, 7. Maurice Hazlett, Passenger 31, 8. Douglas Higbee, Passenger 11 AND Tony Colley – Magician, Passenger 18, 9. Justin Holmes, Passenger 21, 10. They are both Turkish

ON THE WEB

BRITISH CULTURE ON THE WEB

by **Monika Nader**

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Undoubtedly, both teaching and learning English requires constant consulting of original sources. In the heyday of computers and the Internet, browsing websites in search for relevant data becomes a common practice and it is the Internet which occupies a crucial role in broadening horizons and developing language skills. This work is an attempt at a comparative review of a selection of websites devoted exclusively to the British or Irish history and culture and provides a brief summary of the general features, content and functions of the websites listed.

United Kingdom (<http://www.quistinfo.dk/>)

Undeniably, a strong point of the webpage is its being actively linked to various websites, which allows both students and teachers to doubleclick any category needed to get detailed information on e.g. UK education, geography, feasts, food, history, organizations and institutions etc. The website abounds in valuable and up-to-date information ranging from the national anthem, through the cultural and political history, historical and political figures, customs and traditions to the facts

concerning the royal family in the UK. Furthermore, it provides extensive data about Ireland, Canada, Australia, the USA and New Zealand, soon – also about South Africa. What is worth attention about the portal is a vast array of dictionaries, i.e. [Acronym Finder](#), [A Dictionary of Slang](#), [A Dictionary of UK slang](#), [A Dictionary of British Slang](#), [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) and many more (http://hjem.get2net.dk/niels_quist/british.htm#dictionaries). Another important feature is the *English Resources* section divided into the following sections: poetry, reading, drama, Shakespeare, genre, biography, language, media (<http://www.newi.ac.uk/englishresources/ks3/read.html>). There are various language activities, test papers and worksheets under each category enabling students to develop both their language skills and the knowledge of history and culture of the English-speaking countries.

Woodland's Junior School (<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/index.html>)

One of the most comprehensive and richest EFL/ESL sites on the Web, a student-oriented one. Its user-friendly layout encourages students to upgrade their language skills and broadens their knowledge about British history and culture luring them with colorful photos. It features a calendar of traditions and customs observed on the national and local scale in the UK, a list of royal traditions held explaining their origin, providing their descriptions accompanied by representative pictures. Moreover, it comprises information about the flags of Britain, its costumes and clothes, national flowers and emblems, the motto of England and its patron saint as well as the history of making of the Union Jack. The section *Songs, Sayings and Superstitions* provides a selection of English proverbs and sayings together with the most popular and characteristic British songs. Various student discussions forums are extremely friendly and they play a vital role in stimulating students' interest in English culture that can be explored actively through the opinions of their English peers. This website offers a decisive advantage to learners, i.e. worksheets supporting the material found on the pages (<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/activities.html>).

BBC Timelines (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/timelines/>)

An educational website launched by BBC, divided into sections: *British Timeline*, *Northern Ireland Timeline*, *English Timeline*, *Scottish Timeline* and *Welsh Timeline*. By doubleclicking each section a list of topics devoted to given periods of history unfolds. Every entry features historical events and figures being part of the rich cultural heritage of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Moreover, all data are accompanied by colorful pictures. This page includes lots of links to other

websites of interest grouped under *Related Links*. For biographies of the movers and shakers of history, one should search *Historic Figures* and *Featured People*. However, what makes this website really unique is the *Multimedia Zone* which tempts with its interactive games, virtual tours (a free VRML plug-in such as Cortona is provided by the page), animations and a dazzling array of photos. A student-friendly design of the *For Kids* section (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/forkids/>) enables learners of different language level to explore the history and culture of the UK in animations, short films and amazing sounds.

All Info About English Culture (<http://englishculture.allinfoabout.com/>)

The site, edited by [Paula Bardell](#), includes i.e. England in the Spotlight offering articles that keep the readers up-to-date with the latest news and developments in England, a Bi-weekly Newsletter that enables to stay abreast of what is happening there and Seasonal Features, e.g. concerning the Christmas fever. A selection of topics including: [Archaeology](#), [Architecture](#), [Art](#), [Customs/Traditions](#), [Festivals/Holidays](#), [Film](#), [Food & Drink](#), [Genealogy](#), [History](#), [Language](#), [News & Views](#), [Politics](#) etc. give relevant information on a given question. If only it had any interactive materials for students, it might have been used more enthusiastically.

About (<http://gouk.about.com/library/weekly/?once=true&>)

The website features articles on Great Britain and Ireland, dealing specifically with their history, culture, current events or places worth visiting with city and region guides accompanied by maps as well as peculiarities of the British and the Irish. Similarly to the previously reviewed website, it offers no room for interactive language learning.

Visit Britain (<http://www.visitbritain.com/VB3-en-IE/destinationguides/index.aspx>)

Two of its most prominent sections are *Destination Guides*, a selection of richly illustrated articles with outline and route maps attached giving the taste of Britain's distinctive places, and *Experiences*, offering a wide variety of articles on Britain's landmarks and cities. This website depicts England, Scotland, Wales and the Channel Islands from the traveller's perspective and therefore may be a useful supplement to English classes. It is linked to other websites, e.g. **Visit London** (http://eu.visitlondon.com/city_guide/about_london/history/), which is the official London site with short articles outlining the city's most representative features and sights. Comprehensive data are grouped into the following sections: *Attractions*, *Eating Out*, *Entertainment*, *Royal London* etc. *City*

Search is of invaluable help when looking for specific information, e.g. London's attractions.

Furthermore, Visit Britain links to **Visit England**

(<http://www.visitengland.com/destinationguides/index.aspx>), an essential guide to English sites of interest and cities that make it conspicuous. A reference map with counties and regions marked enables a closer look at their peculiarities. A selection of articles on famous places and Route Planner are the strong points of the site, yet Visit London and Visit England are rather traveller- and teacher-oriented for the lack of students' test papers or worksheets.

J – UK (<http://www.i-uk.com/>)

The website, maintained by the British Council, [UK Trade & Investment](#) and [Visit Britain](#), discloses information on *Visiting the UK, Education, Life & Culture*, each of them subdivided into further categories offering a vast array of articles on a given topic and related links for more detailed search. An important feature is the FAQ section with immediate and precise answers. This site is to inspire both teachers and students, unfortunately has no interactive activities section.

Heart o' Scotland (<http://www.heartoscotland.com/>)

A rich source of informative articles on Scottish customs and traditions, as well as its historical and cultural heritage, ranging from Scotland's national dishes through the origins of whisky, tartans and feasts to Scottish myths, legends and poems. Each and every website visitor can get the taste of what Scotland is all about. It provides references to books, films and other websites for further information.

Flying Haggis (<http://www.flyinghaggis.co.uk/scotland/custom.htm>)

It outlines Scottish traditions, customs, history or food (<http://www.flyinghaggis.co.uk/scotland/>) and the language with data concerning its origin, peculiarities and a word bank (<http://www.flyinghaggis.co.uk/scotland/glossary.htm>), which might provide a useful supplement to English classes.

Irish Culture and Irish Customs (<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/>)

A website devoted exclusively to Irish traditions and customs all outlined in short brilliant articles accompanied by rich illustrations. *Kids' Ireland* (<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/1Kids/1Home.html>) is a monthly column where Irish stories and legends are re-told making them more accessible for less advanced students of English. An important feature is *Basic Irish Language Index* (<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/3Focloir/2Index.html>), offering the basics of Irish divided into 67 lessons. For entertaining facts concerning Ireland click on <http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/TriviaDidyouknow.html>. Having subscribed to a free monthly newsletter (<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/Newsletter.html>), one may take part in a contest designed to check the knowledge about the Irish history and culture. This website might come useful for both teachers and EFL/ESL students.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FUTURE EVENTS

ONLINE FIELDDED DISCUSSION "THE FUTURE OF CALL"

31st January – 5th February

IATEFL COMP-SIG

TESOL CALL-IS

“Where has Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) been, where is it now and where is it going?” (Bax, 2002) The questions raised by Stephen Bax and other scholars are still very timely. Are we satisfied with the development that CALL has taken? How would we like CALL to develop in the future? Should specific areas be given priority in CALL-related research? The above questions are but a few among those which often puzzle our minds. What better time to discuss the future than at the beginning of a new year.

Please join the IATEFL COMP-SIG and the TESOL CALL-IS in discussing thoughts, opinions, beliefs and hopes and aspirations for the future of CALL. This online discussion will take place on the electronic list of IATEFL COMP-SIG and will be fielded by Stephen Bax (Canterbury Christ Church University College, UK).

The discussion will take place from 31st January to 5th February. Food for thought is available at: <http://www.iateflcompsig.org.uk/future.htm#thefutureofcall> where Stephen Bax’s article “CALL-past, present and future” and Mark Warschauer’s and Deborah Healey’s article “Computers and Language Learning: An overview” are available.

Make sure you join the IATEFL COMP-SIG list so as to take part in the discussion. You can join by sending a blank email to IATEFLComputerSig-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Looking forward to “seeing” you there and “listening” to what you have to say!

Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou

IATEFL COMP-SIG Deputy Coordinator & Acting Discussion List Moderator

INDEPENDENTLY ONLINE

Thames Valley University, Reading Campus

February 26th, 2005

We would like to invite you to a joint event organised by the Computer SIG and the Learner Independence SIG.

Do the same principles of learner autonomy in the classroom apply in the online learning situation? The Conference will aim to explore the principles and practices which need to be considered in an online learning environment where the aim is to support and foster greater learner autonomy. It will consider how different factors affect the design and functionality of materials for such an environment

Keynote speakers:

Barbara Sinclair

Klaus Schwienhorst

Gavin Dudeney & Nicky Hockly

There will also be a session on exchange of ideas where each individual will have a 10-minute slot to present a practical activity, based on the principles of promoting autonomy in an online learning environment. If you would like to present your ideas send a proposal, outlining the idea in brief by January 20th to j.c.mccormack@reading.ac.uk or gavin.dudeney@theconsultants-e.com.

For more information on the event and invited talks or for a registration form, visit our website at:
<http://www.iateflcompsig.org.uk/future.htm>

EUROCALL 2005

Krakow, Poland

August 24–27, 2005

Conference main theme and title: Fostering autonomy

EUROCALL is a professional organisation for the promulgation of innovative research, development and practice in the area of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) in education and training. EUROCALL conferences bring together educators, researchers, administrators, materials developers, government representatives, vendors of hardware and software, and others interested in the field of CALL and TELL.

EUROCALL 2005 particularly welcomes papers focusing on learner autonomy and new technologies in language learning. Presentations focusing on any other aspect of CALL research, development and practice are also welcomed, especially innovative uses both of established and of leading-edge technologies.

We invite submissions for (i) Academic Papers, (ii) Show & Tell Presentations and (iii) Posters. Please specify under which category you wish your submission to be evaluated.

Please send submissions of 200–300 words by 31 January 2005 to the following address, preferably by e-mail:

Margaret Gammell, EUROCALL Office

Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland,
Fax: +353 61 202556, Email: Margaret.Gammell@ul.ie

All submissions will be acknowledged by e-mail. Successful applicants will be notified by 31 March 2005. Please note that submissions received after this deadline will not be considered for acceptance.

Submissions can also be made for Pre-Conference Events (Seminars and Workshops). These should be addressed to Margaret.Gammell@ul.ie, by 31 January 2005.

Further details can be found at the Conference website, which will be accessible via the EUROCALL website from September 2004: <http://www.eurocall-languages.org>.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

"Teaching English with Technology" (ISSN 1642-1027) is a quarterly electronic journal published by IATEFL Poland Computer Special Interest Group. The Journal deals mainly with issues of using computers, the Internet, computer software in teaching and learning languages.

The editorial board of "Teaching English with Technology":

- Jarek Krajka (Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland) – Editor-in-Chief (Articles, Lesson Plans, Software, On the Web)
- Jozsef Horvath (University of Pecs, Pecs, Hungary) – Editor (Articles, Book Reviews)
- Maria Jose Luzon de Marco (University of Zaragoza, Spain) – Editor (The Internet for ESP)
- Guo Shesen (Luoyang University, Henan, P.R China) – Editor (A Word from a Techie)

You can access the journal from the IATEFL Computer SIG website at this URL:

<http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm>, where the past issues can also be accessed, downloadable as zipped .html or .pdf file. To subscribe to a reminder about the new issue of "Teaching English with Technology," write to: Jarek Krajka, Editor, at jarek.krajka@wp.pl. In the Subject line, write: Subscription Request.

The next issue of "Teaching English with Technology" will be published in April 2005.

Submission deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2005. Detailed submission guidelines can be downloaded from <http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/guidelines.doc>.

We invite submissions covering the following categories:

- Article: articles describing classroom practice or discussions of work in progress, being of immediate relevance to teachers, or articles presenting case studies or work in progress

- The Internet for ESP: practical discussions of Web-based activities/classroom ideas for the ESP environment
- Lesson plan: plans of lessons done in the Internet or using computers, set in the reality of the education system, detailing the procedure, technical requirements, skills needed by students and teacher, together with URLs used in the lesson and any worksheets/checklists students are asked to complete
- On the Web: discussions of websites having potential for organising Internet lessons around them or relevant in some way to the field of English language teaching and learning
- Software: descriptions, evaluations and recommendations of widely available language learning software or articles pertaining to the use of software in language learning
- A Word from a Techie: discussions of applications of computer programmes to teaching English, outlining new possibilities given by software to the process of learning and teaching, explanations of technological issues
- Reports from Past Events: brief accounts of conferences, methodological workshops, commercial presentations, courses that relate to the field of using computer technology in teaching English
- Announcements of Future Events: as above, together with contact addresses.

We invite also works published elsewhere, but please give precise reference.

Please forward the following details with each submission:

- author(s) full name(s) including title(s)
- job title(s)
- organization(s) full contact details of all authors including email address, postal address, telephone and fax numbers.

Submissions should be sent by email as attachments to the Editor, Jarek Krajka, at jarek.krajka@wp.pl, with the subject being "Journal Submission." Please specify in the letter what word-processing programme you are using, and preferably send .rtf version as well. All submissions undergo the process of blind peer review and are returned to authors with suggestions for changes/corrections.

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