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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

by Jarek Krajka

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It is my utmost pleasure and honour, as the Editor-in-Chief, to present you with the sixth issue of *Teaching English with Technology*, an electronic journal for teachers of English interested in using computers, the Internet and modern technology in the classroom. The profile of the Journal is that it should be immediately useful and applicable in teaching environments, which imposes certain focus of articles, reviews and other contributions. On the other hand, it needs to be remembered that no practice will ever exist without theory, and it is also the concern of the editorial board to provide that firm theoretical background in CALL.

As usual, I would like to give some information about the Journal. It is still growing, both in the number of subscribers and the number of submissions for publication. The Journal is distributed to over 600 readers all over the world, with the biggest numbers of subscribers in Poland and China. The other way of accessing the Journal, namely reading it online on the IATEFL Poland Computer Special Interest Group website at <http://www.iatefl.org.pl/sig/call/callnl.htm> is equally popular, and the site has already been visited over 4,500 times since its launch in January 2001. The Journal and its URL have been added to various Web directories, both general (such as Yahoo, <http://dir.yahoo.com>) and specifically EFL/ESL ones (The Internet TESL Journal's Links for EFL Teachers, <http://iteslj.org/links>), which, together with my announcements on CALL-related international and local discussion lists, has made it better-known and more popular than before. As a Web search for a string of words "Teaching English with Techology" shows, a number of CALL scholars and EFL teachers list TEwT on their links pages as a journal worth reading. What is more, even one case of copyright infringement was discovered, where one of sites with EFL teaching materials framed an article from the Journal website without the permission of the editorial board.

The Journal is growing not only in the number of subscribers, but it brings together CALL professionals from all over the world to create a publication they really need. Now I am honoured to inform you that the editorial team of *Teaching English with Technology* consists of the following people: me, Jarek Krajka (Lublin, Poland), responsible for Lesson Plans, A Word from a Techie and Software Reviews; Jozsef Horvath (Pecs, Hungary), responsible for Articles; Maria Jose Luzon Marco (Zaragoza, Spain), responsible for The Internet and ESP and finally Marek Wozniak (Warsaw, Poland), responsible for Website Reviews. I would like to greet very warmly Maria and Marek, who have recently joined the editorial team, and wish them fruitful work for the benefit of EFL/ESL community.

As for the content of this month's issue, we can enjoy an article by Janos Blasszauer "Collaborative Projects via the Internet." The author, an English teacher and a British Council teacher trainer from Hungary, retells his experiences of starting and conducting online projects with his students. Apart from practical tips of advice on how to make a successful online collaboration and where to find such opportunities on the Net, the author provides also sound

theoretical background to the theory of CALL.

The Internet and ESP section continues the idea of presenting different activity structures that can be used when teaching English for Specific Purposes. This time Maria Jose Luzon from the University of Zaragoza (Spain) describes a problem-solving activity called online research module. The contribution starts with the general introduction to the idea of research modules, followed by the pedagogical rationale for using this activity with ESP students. Then, the author presents some necessary conditions for a successful activity of this type and finally gives a number of links to websites where ready-made research modules can be found.

The Internet Lesson Plans section is much more extensive this time. Instead of having two or three lesson plans, as was the case in previous issues, this time we get a complete unit of seven lessons, each meant for two or three lesson periods, written by David Hughes from Zayed University, the United Arab Emirates. This fully-developed course serves the goal of familiarising students with the US culture and makes extensive use of the Web as a teaching medium. Thus, I strongly recommend this article, due to its innovative methods, ready-to-use lesson plans, worksheets and links to relevant websites.

A Word from a Techie tries to tackle a very painful issue - how to use the slow-connection Internet in teaching English on the Web? This problem is present in places where schools are underresourced or the monopoly of state telecommunication companies make Internet connection fees really exorbitant. The author gives a number of practical tips on what to do to make the most of the slow-loading websites, so that students are given the opportunity to participate in online learning.

As for Website Reviews, the reviewer continues dealing with sites developing different language skills, and this time the focus is on reading comprehension online. Thus, readers can find a review of a few sites with online reading tasks, based on newspaper articles, fables or short stories. The interactivity of the sites allows for self-study and students should be encouraged to use them to develop their reading skills both in and out of class.

Finally, in Reports from Past Events, readers can find accounts of two interesting events: a conference on practical applications of corpora in language teaching and a meeting of IATEFL Poland Computer Special Interest Group.

I hope that you will find this issue of the Journal useful and stimulating. It is also my deep and sincere wish that for next issues you will be still willing to share your ideas, solutions and teaching techniques with others.

I wish you good reading.

ARTICLE

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS VIA THE INTERNET

by **Janos Blasszauer**

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Introduction

I am a Hungarian EFL teacher at an academic grammar school in Nagykanizsa and have been interested in the potentials of information technology in English as a foreign language (EFL) education since 1997, when I read about email projects in English language teaching journals (e.g., Tillyer 1995, 1997). I began to understand hardware and software, the use of teaching and learning packages, and some of the latest developments on the Internet, such as easy and free file and voice message exchanges and the opportunities of their use at schools supported by a scheme founded by the Ministry of Education. I started thinking about the application of the technology to meet the requirements of communicative methodology and the project-based approach. As an EFL teacher and a British Council in-service teacher educator, I had an opportunity to take an increasingly growing interest in developing teaching practices and methods.

Theory and Practice

Perhaps the best known perspective for looking at cooperative communication in the FL classroom is the interactionist approach originally derived from Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis. Krashen claims that second language acquisition providing optimal input in the classroom to foster the development of fluency does not mean teaching grammar. Krashen (1985) and McLaughlin (1987) concluded from the research on second language acquisition that it best develops in ways similar to first languages: in contexts where the negotiation of meaning, and not the correctness of form, is the central force, and where language exposure is real, extensive, and free of anxiety.

However, in most language classrooms, both ESL and EFL, language exposure is artificial, limited, and anxiety often arises. Krashen (1985) hypothesised that the best classroom L2 acquisition will occur when the input provided to learners is comprehensible, interesting and relevant, not grammatically sequenced, provided in abundant quantity, and in such a way as to promote self-confidence and self-direction, while arousing little or no anxiety.

I had two motivations for starting to use the Internet in my English classes. First, I wanted students to be exposed to a range of English, wider than they usually encounter in their daily lives in Hungary, hoping to find e-mail penpals for them. Second, I wanted to encourage students to use English for pleasure outside class, and thought if I taught them the basics of e-mail (relying partly on regular letter writing; Morvai 1998) and netsurfing, they would be likely to continue these activities during their free time. When I tried using the Internet in the EFL classroom, these expectations were fulfilled, and I discovered many other reasons for doing such projects.

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning

This term refers to the use of the computer and the Internet in the teaching programme which harnesses the main potential of the medium: that students can share thoughts and views on topics they are interested in, collaborate with partner classes focusing on a particular theme, and create online databases (Brandon and Hollingshead 1999; Fowell and Levy 1995). Warschauer (1997) suggested the term „computer mediated” collaborative learning, as opposed to „computer-supported,” as the technology serves as a medium, whereas the support is continued to be provided by the teacher. According to Warschauer, it facilitates many-to-many communication, synchronous tasks, time- and place-independent communication and student publishing, each contributing to the development of a language competence that is gaining importance: *interactive competence* (Chun 1998). The approach has been shown to have a positive impact on attitudes and achievement, in terms of language and cultural skills development as well as in becoming aware of group processes, if proper conditions exist (Gardner 1985; Braunstein, Meloni and Zolotareva 2000; Fisher, Phelps and Ellis 2000).

Telecollaboration, or tasks completed in groups via the Internet, enables teachers and students to establish connections with other online citizens and engage in activities using the FL. Telecollaborational projects include keypal exchange projects (Horváth 1994), live chats, global classroom exchange and electronic mentoring. Teachers can serve as mentors to help students correspond asynchronously or in real time to explore specific topics or study in an interactive format. This may take the form of data collection and analysis using online questionnaires, thematically related information exchange, electronic publishing (Gaer 1995; Kusunoki 1999) such as e-books, online magazines, newspapers, poems, recipes, collaborative problem solving, information searches and process writing. (For resources for such tasks, see Blasszauer 1998; Windeatt, Hardisty and Eastment 2000; for the design of a successful project see Andres and Rogers 1995; „Marco Polo” 2000.)

Why to start Internet projects?

Projects in general engage students in authentic, real world tasks that enhance learning (Long and Crookes 1992; Prabhu 1987). Students are given open-ended projects or problems with more than one approach or answer, intended to simulate situations. Both contexts are defined as student-centred and include the teacher in the role of facilitator or coach. Students generally work in co-operative groups and are encouraged to search for multiple sources of information (Müller-Hartmann 2000).

Project-based learning typically begins with an end product or artefact in mind, whose production requires specific content knowledge and skills, and typically raises problems to be solved. Projects may vary widely in scope and time frame, and the end products also vary according to the technology level.

The project-based learning approach uses a production model. First, students define the purpose for creating the end product and identify their audience. They research their topic, design their product and create a plan for project management. They then begin the project, solve problems and deal with issues that arise in production, and finish their product, reflecting on and evaluating their work (Bellnet 2000).

The entire process is meant to be authentic, mirroring real-life activities and utilising students' own ideas and approaches. Though the end product is important, it is the content knowledge and skills acquired during the process that are important to the success of the approach. In project-based learning the end products are elaborate and shape the production process, such as the creation of an online magazine or newspaper.

My first project was a school and town description, then a teenage life project, a cooking theme, and finally a project about discipline problems and violence at schools. The cooking project's aim was to find out what French people eat at special feasts – the former school where I used to work was Thúry Gy. Secondary Technical School for Trade and Catering and had a twin-sister relationship with a French school. Students also got to know how people spend this time and where they usually eat out. They had to make surveys about what people eat in their own surroundings and after collecting, analysing and synthesising, two data files were composed. Students found pleasure in the activities and even cooked several of the recipes during the practice lessons at school.

Since September 2000 I have been teaching at Batthyány Lajos Grammar School. After some initial practice sessions at the computer lab, sixteen students were asked to think about their dream holiday destinations and then find out as much information as possible about them. The Olympic Games gave another opportunity to focus on a topic which interested the vast majority of the students, which is also a theme in the school-leaving exam. I collected several inquiry-based projects on the Olympics. For instance, at the Olympic Primer Site students had to work in pairs and had to choose a topic and read about it. After they finished reading about it, they wrote a short quiz about the topic (5 or 6 questions). They could write a true/false quiz or a multiple choice quiz. Then they exchanged their quizzes with each other and tried to complete them after reading about the relevant topic. Students were energised seeing that they could make good use of their English knowledge, and that they can polish their computer and Internet skills as well.

Recently my school took part in a European Union project and the possibility to join the project was due to the fact that by the means of the Internet I am on a constant lookout for meaningful project opportunities. The project „Europe? I believe in it”, was organized by an association which pursues an activity of European promotion, the Centro di coordinamento Info Eurogente in Benevento (Italy) and enjoyed the financial support of the European Commission. The objective of the project was to increase students' awareness of the values which inspired the construction of united Europe and which still determine its choices in view of further enlargement. Five conferences were held: the first one on 20 January in Morcone on the theme „Solidarity, so that all the European be the same”, the second one in Duino on 3 February on the theme „Tolerance, so that European people can live together in peace”. The meeting in Nagykanizsa was on 23 February on „How to safeguard local culture in the united Europe”, on 9 March in Malta on the theme „Culture, an integration tool among European people” and the last one was on 30 March in Brighthouse High School (Great Britain) on the theme „Democracy, as European power”. The following schools were involved in the project: Scientific High School, Morcone (Benevento - Italy), Junior College (Msida - Malta), United World College of Adriatic, Duino (Trieste - Italy), Batthyany Lajos High School (Nagykanizsa-Hungary) and Brighthouse High School.

As a follow up project I will work together with my foreign counterparts to work out and launch

keypal exchange projects and thus deepen the connection between the participating schools and to put up and maintain a website for discussing matters about Europe and other themes which are relevant to our students' interest.

The announcement of future events in this journal, *Teaching English with Technology* (Vol. 1, no. 2, March 2001), made me aware of another great possibility concerning collaboration, namely the European Schoolnet website (www.eun.org). Sometimes there are online chats about the EU and now my students are eager to participate in these chat events and on others such as the one which is to come on 16 November. This day is the „International day for tolerance” and the online event is organised by the Time website (www.timeproject.org).

There are several approaches to planning out a successful project. I observe the following steps when it comes to planning a project:

1. Decide on the project
2. Draft time frame
3. Plan activities
4. Plan assessment
5. Begin project with students
6. Finish project and reflect

This framework is meant to help me plan my project and utilise website materials at each step. The framework is structured enough to guide my process, and flexible enough to adapt to my practices and needs.

1. When I decide on the project I identify what the major goal of the project is, what content will be incorporated, and to try to identify any constraints as well as to decide on the multimedia component and the scope of the project.

2. The time frame component means that I decide on the length of the project by writing down some due dates or checkpoints for project goals to be completed. I try to allow room for flexibility and changes in project.

3. Before I plan activities I usually browse the existing ones online and being on a constant lookout for new projects on the Internet I am always lucky to find some which caters for my teaching purposes and my students' needs.

4. I assess students' work in projects by using project rubrics such as the one at <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/tidepoolunit/Rubrics/collrubric.html>.

5. Beginning a project with students means that I discuss goals with the whole class. Students may also contribute to some of the initial planning of the project. I allow space for flexibility and I am on the alert to observe what is working and what is not. I always give time for my students to get the swing of new practices, to get the required skills needed for the project. My task as a teacher is to establish a meaningful project, to teach students the skills inevitable for fulfilling the project, to stick to the original time frame or discuss with pupils any revisions to the project and to create a rubric which measures students' work.

6. When finishing a project I reflect on it. As a rule, I ask my pupils to fill in a questionnaire aiming at getting feedback from them. Having created my website I showcase the finished

products (www.geocities.com/bjohnnyus/myict.htm) and jot down in my diary the main points of a certain project adding in it the suggested improvements for next time. I also take time to write down my personal reflections on the project.

Conclusion

I have found several benefits of ICT projects. They increase students' self-esteem as they realise that English is not only another compulsory subject they have to learn at school but it is a vehicle for communicating with their peers all over the world. My experiences with online projects also show that they accommodate different learning styles – e.g. shy students open up when it comes to writing emails; learners are encouraged and motivated to become involved in authentic communicative situations. In keypal projects students write for a real audience, usually to their peers instead of merely composing a piece of writing for the teacher. In addition, the privacy afforded by technology allows learners to participate cooperatively in the educational process.

I think ICT projects can reduce the feelings of isolation by linking schools with the global community, and by creating a student-centred learning environment the teacher's role changes from being the purveyor of information to the role of an organiser, collaborator and coach. Students and instructors do not need to be masters at ICT skills. The only prerequisites of ICT projects are to enable students to communicate, search for and analyse information in an electronic environment.

The essential role for teachers in our era is, as I see it, to give students the opportunity to discover and take an active part in this new world, which has an increasingly important part in our lives.

Appendix: Telecollaboration opportunities (based on Blasszauer 1999a, 1999b)

Several „virtual places” on the World Wide Web can help us find *curriculum-based telecollaboration opportunities*. Particularly helpful, frequently updated telecollaborative activity indexes include:

Global SchoolNet's Projects & Programs (<http://www.gsn.org/>). This is the most comprehensive of all of the K–12 telecollaborative projects directories. Don't miss the searchable Internet Projects Registry at this site (<http://www.gsn.org/pr/index.html>).

KIDPROJ (a part of KIDLINK, www.kidlink.org/KIDPROJ/index.html). These globally focused projects involve learners aged 15 and younger from many different countries. All student participants must answer four questions about themselves and their ideas for making the world a better place prior to project participation.

I*EARN Projects (<http://www.iearn.org/projects/>). These are primarily social action projects involving participants from very diverse geographic locations.

NickNacks Telecollaboration (<http://telecollaborate.net/>). This site contains many helpful suggestions about how to participate in educational telecollaboration. NickNacks also sponsors and points visitors to high-quality, curriculum-based projects.

Blue Web'n (www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn/). This project-review service helps us locate telecollaboration opportunities according to curriculum area and four activity types: Web-based activities, Web-based projects, Web-based tutorials, and Unit & Lesson Plans. The contents of

Blue Web'n large projects database can also be searched by keyword.

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THE INTERNET AND ESP

PROBLEM-SOLVING ACTIVITIES: ONLINE RESEARCH MODULES

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Problem-solving is one of the most important skills that students of scientific and technical disciplines have to develop. Since ESP teaching should be connected with the activities of the disciplines it serves, it is desirable to incorporate problem-solving activities into the ESP curriculum. These activities are based on a constructivist view of learning, from which learning is seen as knowledge construction. With regard to language learning, the constructivist view is that learners understand how language is used and learn to use language by engaging in activities similar to those that they will find in real life and which are related to the context where they intend to use language.

The online activities involving problem-solving which can be used with ESP students are of varying complexity. I will discuss here an activity designed to be completed in four to eight classes by students working in groups: the online research module. Online research modules are problem-solving or decision making activities, in which students use electronic resources (among other resources) to conduct research and find viable solutions to real life problems. The students' task does not just consist in reporting information found on the WWW, but on evaluating information and creating answers.

Ryan Phillips, a designer of online research modules, defines them with the following formula (www.tie.net/train/ryan/researchmodule.html):

Just-In-Time + Networkable + User Specific + Learner Positive + Knowledge Acquisition =
Research Modules

The pivotal part of the activity is the essential question or problem to be solved. This should be a real life problem, relevant to the student's target context and with no clear-cut answer. There are three basic types of questions: Why? How? Which is the best? Examples of these questions are the following: Which group has the better legal claim to the Kennewick Man? Which are the most important inventions on planet Earth? Answering these questions requires students to use language to analyse problems, to express cause-effect relations, to form and test hypotheses and draw conclusions, to make predictions and propose solutions, to evaluate and justify decisions. Thus, students practise skills that are a basic part of the ESP syllabus.

Research modules are based upon the „research cycle” created by Dr. Jamie McKenzie. The cycle has the following phases or steps:

1. **Question.** Analyse the problem and list the questions you need to answer in order to solve it. The questions will help the students decide which information to look for.
2. **Plan.** Develop a strategy to find appropriate information: share out responsibilities between

group members, select the resources to be used.

3. **Gather.** Collect information which helps to answer the key questions.

4. **Sort, Sift and Analyse.** Analyse the information collected to see if there is enough information to solve the problem.

5. **Synthesise.** Find an answer or solve the problem using the information you have collected and analysed.

6. **Evaluate.** Think about what else is needed.

7. **Report.** Present the work and share it with the rest of the class

A clear description of what each part involves can be found in „The research cycle 2000” (<http://www.fno.org/dec99/rcycle.html>) and in „Exploring research investigations” (<http://www.pacificrim.net/~chinshaw/wwwri/steps.htm>) The best way to understand online research modules is to look at an example and see the different parts. See the module „Cave creator” (http://www.gpisd.org/gpisd/modules/midschools/cave_creator/default.htm) or any of the modules listed below.

There are a great number of online research modules on the Web that can be used with ESP students, even though they were not originally intended for ESP students. ESP teachers can also construct their own research modules, focusing on content that is motivating and interesting for their students. (See the „Module Maker”, <http://questioning.org/module/module.html>) The components of an online research module are the following:

1. **Background or introduction.** Students are introduced to a real life problem or situation and are usually given one or more Internet links where they can find more information.
2. **Question/Task.** Students are given a role in the situation and are asked to complete a task or solve a problem. An example of a task is the following: „Your town will be cut off from its current energy supplies for 10 years and the local council is anxious to discover alternate methods. You have been selected to research and report back to the council on alternate energy methods. You are to compare 3 different alternative energy sources and choose one”
3. **Product.** A description of the final product students have to achieve.
4. **Timeline.** A description of which tasks should be completed each day.
5. **Process and guidelines.** Step-by-step description of what students should do on each visit to the computer. These instructions may include links to related websites and resources where students can find information to solve the problem. If the online research module does not include links which lead students right to the resources, the activity can be used to help students develop searching skills. In this case the teacher must provide the appropriate guidance.
6. **Evaluation.**

As can be seen, one of the defining features, and a great advantage, of online research modules is that they are well-structured and focused activities: teachers provide a timeline of the tasks that students should complete each day. To complete the activity students just need to follow a clearly defined sequence of steps during several sessions at the computer. This helps students not to waste valuable time. Students are guided through the activity and they learn concrete

strategies to collect information and create answers.

Examples of research modules useful for ESP students:

Biology:

-Classifying animals

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/stage1_Modules/whats_alive/whats_alive.html

-Stem cell research

http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/modules/stem_cells/index.html

-Endangered Species

<http://www.gpsid.org/gpsid/modules/Highschools/GPHS/GPToad/VisitOne.html>

-Aussie Zoo

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/stage2_Modules/zoo/aussie_zoo.htm

Law

-Which group has the better legal claim to the Kennewick Man?

<http://www.bham.wednet.edu/online/kwick/bones1.htm>

Medicine:

-Diseases, Conditions, and Disabilities

<http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/modules/diseases/index.html>

-Antidrug campaign

http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/modules/sub_abuse/index.html

-Cloning: Scientific Breakthrough

<http://www.gpsid.org/gpsid/modules/midschools/Lee/Visit%20One.html>

-Teenage smoking

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/stage3_Modules/smoking/teenage_smoking.htm

-Nutrition Mission

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/resmodm.html>

Engineering

-Inventions

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/stage2_Modules/inventions/inventions.htm

-The green driving machine

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/stage3_Modules/green_machine/machine.htm

-Alternate energy

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/secondary_modules/energy/alternate_energy.htm

-Energy and the Environment

<http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/modules/energy8/index.html>

-Computer Innovations Research Module

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/resmodm.html>

Geology

-Cave creator

http://www.gpsid.org/gpsid/modules/midschools/cave_creator/default.htm

Geography

-Moving? World Geography

<http://www.gpsid.org/gpsid/modules/Highschools/GPHS/Country/VISIT1.HTM>

-Weather

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/rm/chris/weather/default.html>

Business

-Investment

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/rm/invest/default.html>

-Developing a Small Business Plan

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/rm/mktg/default.html>

-Stock Market

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/rm/stocks/default.html>

Research modules collections

The following sites contain research modules that may be used for ESP teaching:

-Baltimore County Public Schools' Research Modules

<http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/modules/index.html>

-NSW CAP OnLine Research Modules

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/bbcap_intro.html

-Grand Prairie Independent Schools District

<http://www.gpsid.org/gpsid/modules/modulepage.html>

-Howard County Research Modules

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/res/resmod.html>

Information on online research modules

More information on online research modules can be found on the following sites:

-Making the Net Work for Schools: Online Research Modules (<http://www.fno.org/sept97/online.html>). Jamie McKenzie, the creator of the Module Maker concept, explains online research modules.

-Module Maker for the Research Module (<http://questioning.org/module/module.html>)

-BBCAP Online Research Modules

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/bbcap_intro.html

-Create your own Online Research Module (<http://66.39.15.72/>). A template designed to help teachers to plan and produce web-based research lessons.

-How to evaluate Online Research Modules <http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/web/rmrubric.html>

-Resources to develop Online Research Modules

<http://www.k12.hi.us/~paia/research/resources.html>

-Curriculum resources: online research modules

<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/centoff/cmisis/eval/curriculum/research/>

-The process of building an online lesson

<http://www.tie.net/train/marcia/onlinemodules/webquest.htm>

- Have IT Your Way with Online Learning <http://staffdevelop.org/online.html>

-A research module on research modules <http://www.tie.net/train/ryan/researchmodule.html>

-WWW research investigations investigations <http://www.pacificrim.net/~chinshaw/wwwri/>

A page to help teachers construct online research lesson:

-Research Module Process <http://www.slimbuttes.com/researchmodules/index.html>

Related sites:

-The WebQuest page (WebQuests are activities similar to research modules)

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html>

-Engaging Learners in Complex, Authentic Contexts: Instructional Design for the Web

www.scu.edu.au/schools/sawd/moconf/mocpapers/moc10.pdf

-Problem-based learning <http://www.edcoe.k12.ca.us/tech/pbl.html>. Information on problem-based learning and links to online problem-based activities.

INTERNET LESSON PLANS

USING WEBSITES TO EXPLORE US CULTURE AND DEVELOP CULTURAL AWARENESS

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Introduction

The following activities form a unit of study and are designed to give ESL students a deeper understanding of their culture and US culture through exploration of Internet websites. The materials are aimed at upper-intermediate students, but could be adapted for beginning and advanced students as well.

The Internet, unlike many other educational tools, has the power to bring students into direct contact with cultures different from their own. Books, magazines, movies, videos and other forms of media can only give a filtered or mediated view of a particular culture. By accessing various web pages students come into direct contact with cultural documents.

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT

Introduction:

This first activity will get students thinking about what kinds of information are important to all cultures and what kinds of information they can get on US culture from the Internet. This activity will also get initial information on the class' views of US culture.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- To introduce students to the possibility that they can learn about US culture on the Internet.
- To get students thinking about what facets of US culture they might find on the Internet.
- To get, in writing, students' general impressions about US culture.

Materials:

Handout „[Generating Ideas about US Culture on the Internet](#)”

Time: 20-30 minutes (depending on the number of students)

Procedure:

1. Teacher makes a general statement that the next part of the course will be devoted to learning about US culture using the Internet. Teacher also tells the class that this unit of study will give them practice in reading, writing, speaking, listening and vocabulary.
2. Teacher distributes the handout. After students complete the worksheet alone, they share their answers in small groups (3-5 students).
3. After groups have had a chance to discuss their answers, each group makes a quick presentation to the class describing the most interesting things that they discussed.

Extension Activity: None.

WORKSHEET: Generating Ideas about US Culture on the Internet.

Instructions: Answer the following questions

1. Have you learned anything about US culture from the Internet? If so, what did you learn?
2. Think about US culture as it is represented on the Internet. What aspects of US culture do you think you can find on the Internet? Make a list here:
3. What are your general impressions of US culture? What is the US like? What are people from the US like?

ACTIVITY 2: THE DO-IT-YOURSEFER

Introduction:

One important aspect of US culture is the idea of individualism. An aspect of this idea is self reliance and the ability to „make it on your own.” Many people from the US feel that they should be able take care of themselves and do things by themselves. One way that this feeling manifests itself in the US is through the popularity of hardware stores and large do-it-yourself centers. Although some cultures see manual labor as demeaning, US culture does not. The aim of this activity is to help students from another culture learn about this facet of US life.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- To teach about American beliefs in self-reliance and independence through examining hardware stores and do-it-yourself center web pages.
- To teach some vocabulary related to hardware stores.
- To give students practice in skimming and scanning from a computer screen.

- To introduce students to the ideas of differing cultural values.

Materials:

- An Internet lab with 1 computer for every three students.
- US hardware and do-it-yourself web pages:
 - <http://www.valuhomecenters.com>
 - <http://www.homedepot.com>
 - <http://www.lowes.com>

Time: 50-60 minutes.

Procedure:

IN CLASS:

1. Before the class goes into the Internet Lab, the teacher asks if the class knows what hardware stores are, what you can buy there and what kinds of people shop there. If students are unfamiliar with what a hardware store is then the teacher explains the kinds of merchandise that can be found there and what kind of people shop at such stores.

IN INTERNET LAB:

2. Individually students look at websites for two hardware stores (see above). At each site students make a list of things that are for sale in these stores or through the site.
3. Students pair up and share with a partner the list of merchandise that they have found.
4. The teacher circulates to each student to make sure they are on task.
5. After each pair has a good amount of material the teacher calls on individual pairs to report what they found.
6. On the board the teacher makes a list of the merchandise that is related to „doing-it-yourself,” such as tools, bathroom items (sinks, bathtubs etc.), lumber, paneling, paint, wallpaper, plumbing supplies, windows, doors, etc.
7. After the list is complete the teacher tells the class that these things are on sale to the general public and that anyone can buy them.
8. In pairs, small groups or as a whole class, students discuss *why* people would buy them and what kind of people buy these things. When discussing who buys this merchandise it is important for students to consider social class as well as occupation. Student ideas should be put up on the board. Hopefully some groups will come up with an answer similar to „people who like to or do fix things themselves.” If these kinds of answers are not forthcoming, then the teacher explains that many people from all walks of life try to fix things themselves.
9. The teacher next asks students to make statements about Americans or American culture based on what they have just found out. When students say something like Americans like to fix or do things by themselves, without hiring help, the teacher explains the phrase „Do-it-yourself” and a/the „do-it-yourselfer.” If these answers are not forthcoming the

teacher may scaffold responses to lead the class in this direction. It should also be pointed out to students at this point that people skill with mechanical things is valued. If time is an issue, this could be assigned for homework and the rest of the activity could continue the next day.

10. As a wrap up the teacher asks students what they think of this part of US culture and if they have anything similar in their own culture(s). The teacher might also ask if these kinds of stores would be successful in their countries. Why or why not?

Extension Activity:

Students jot down any difficult vocabulary they found while looking at the Internet. This can form the basis of later vocabulary instruction.

ACTIVITY 3: US High Schools

Introduction:

The differences that exist between schools across cultures can be an interesting topic of discussion for students. Web pages that schools produce can give rich insights into those schools. This activity takes advantage of school-produced web pages as a source of cultural information.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- Students will explore and examine their beliefs about US High Schools.
- Students will learn about US High Schools by looking at high school home pages.
- Students will compare US High Schools with high schools in their countries.
- Students will practice reading skills from authentic Internet texts.
- Students may practice inferring.

Materials:

- Student pen and paper.
- Computer Lab with enough Internet connected computers for each pairs of students.
- The following sites:
 - Great Valley High School Main Page. <http://www.gvsd.org/gvhs>
 - North Hagerstown High School's Home Page, Hagerstown, Maryland, USA, <http://www.wcboe.k12.md.us/mainfold/schoopag/high/nhhpage/>
 - Bronx High School of Science. <http://www.bxscience.edu>
 - Todd County High School Home Page. <http://www.tcsdk12.org/TCHS/tchshome.htm>

Time: Part 1: 30 minutes

Part 2: 30 minutes

Part 3: Will vary according to the number of students in the class.

Procedure:

Part 1:

1. In small groups (3-5 students), students brainstorm ideas about what they know and think about US High Schools. As a guide the teacher may give broad areas that students might think about such as: *administration, teachers, students, courses, extra-curricular activities, problems of US students, problems of US teachers, graduation requirements, appearance of the school, size of classes, size of the school.* The teacher may also help students think of ideas by asking them if they know anything about US high schools from the media and whether or not they think that these impressions are true.

2. After each group has brainstormed they share their ideas with the class. The teacher writes down all ideas on an OHP or the blackboard. Students write these things down also because they will need them later.

3. After looking at their papers, students write down 5 beliefs they have about US High Schools. It is possible that some students will have trouble doing this because they may not understand what is being asked of them. If this is the case the teacher may give some examples such as:

- "I believe that Japanese people are very hardworking." Or "I believe that Japanese schools are very strict."

As a further guide the teacher might have them write down one belief about each of the categories listed above.

4. After students are finished writing down their beliefs they circulate around the room and find one other student who has similar beliefs about US schools. For the activity on the following day these students will be partners.

Part 2:

1. Students sit with their partner from part 1.

2. The pairs look at the statements they made about what they believe about US high schools to refresh their memory.

3. The pairs browse through a US high school web page to see if what they thought is true. They note down if they were able to find the necessary information. It is possible that they may not find a direct answer. If not, then they must infer, if they can, based on what they see. They write down their findings. Students can go to any of the following sites:

- Great Valley High School Main Page. <http://www.gvsd.org/gvhs>
- North Hagerstown High School's Home Page, Hagerstown, Maryland, USA, <http://www.wcboe.k12.md.us/mainfold/schoopag/high/nhhpage/>
- Bronx High School of Science. <http://www.bxscience.edu>
- Todd County High School Home Page. <http://www.tcsdk12.org/TCHS/tchshome.htm>

4. Students use the following questions to guide them in understanding the websites. Not all questions will apply to all sites. Students should understand that the questions are meant only as a guide:

- What kinds of courses/curriculum are offered? Do any of the classes that are offered surprise you?
- What kinds of things do students do outside of class?
- What kinds of extra-curricular activities are popular at the school?
- What kinds of clubs does the school have?
- Are there Sports/Athletics at the school? What kinds?
- Does the school have a mascot? Why was that one chosen? What do you think about the idea of a mascot?
- If there is a picture of the school – what does it look like?
- What’s good/bad about the school? Be specific.
- Is there anything else interesting that you found on the site?

5. Pairs look for ways in which the high schools they have looked at are different from their own high school. They make a note of this.

6. Pairs organize what they have found into a report and present their findings to the class. The teacher will have to give guidance for this phase of the lesson. The teacher should circulate to each group and check the information that they have and help them to organize it. The presentations should include what their original beliefs were and what they were able to find on the Internet to prove or disprove their beliefs. The presentations should also include answers to the questions from part 9 above. Lastly, the presentations should include the way that what they found on the Internet is different from their own high schools.

7. For homework the pairs further refine and organize their presentations.

Part 3:

1. Pairs present their findings to the class in an oral report. (If there is a computer available that has a projection system then the pairs present their findings while showing the site).

2. The teacher leads the class in a discussion of what they have discovered about US high schools. If students are generally non responsive to this discussion then take a few moments and have students take a few moments to write down some ideas that they have. Then the teacher will ask a few students to read out their ideas.

Extension Activity:

Students write an essay comparing the high school they investigated with a high school they attended in the past.

ACTIVITY 4: US ATTITUDE TOWARDS PETS

Introduction:

One thing that varies from culture to culture is extent to which animals are viewed as pets. This activity explores this aspect of US culture.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- Students learn about US attitudes towards pets by looking at pet store web sites.
- Students practice making inferences based on the information they find on an Internet site.
- Students practice skimming and scanning from an Internet site.
- Students practice inferring.

Materials:

- Handout „[Pet Store Internet Worksheet](#)”
- Internet lab with one Internet connected computer for each student and a teacher’s computer with projector and screen.
- Websites: PETsMART (<http://www.petsmart.com>), Petco (<http://www.petco.com/>).

Time: 50-60 minutes.

Procedure:

1. To prepare the class, the teacher asks the class about what they know about US attitudes towards pets.
2. The teacher introduces two Internet sites of large pet store chains. These sites are: PETsMART (<http://www.petsmart.com>) and Petco (<http://www.petco.com/>). At the PETsMART site (see appendix) the teacher will point out the various types of merchandise that can be bought. To give the students a better feel for what is on the site the teacher then shows the „dogs” section of the site, pointing out the long list of categories of dog merchandise on the left side of the screen. The teacher follows a similar format with the Petco site by clicking on the „shop on line” text.
3. The class is divided in half. And students are put in pairs with one computer per pair. Half of the pairs browse the PETsMART site and half look at the Petco site. The students are given about 15 minutes to look at the web sites and complete the Pet Store Internet Worksheet (see appendix). This is a sheet that asks the students several true/false questions about US attitudes towards pets. Some of the information is not on the web pages. The students must infer if the statements are true or false by what they see on the web sites.
4. Once all students are finished, the teacher gives the class the correct answers to the true/false questions.
5. Finally, the students discuss in small groups the differences between attitudes towards pets in their country and in the US. After the groups are finished each group relates the content of their discussion by telling the class 2 interesting things that came up in there

discussion.

Extension Activity:

Students write an essay comparing attitudes about pets in their country and in the US.

Pet Store Internet Worksheet

Instructions: Write „true” or „false” for each statement based on what you have seen and learned from the Internet sites.

1. _____ Americans spend a lot of money each year on their pets.
2. _____ Sometimes Americans buy things for their pets such as toys, special beds and special clothes.
3. _____ It is against the law to mistreat an animal in the US. A person might go to jail or be fined if they abuse an animal.
4. _____ People sometimes bury their pets in expensive pet cemeteries that allow them to eventually be buried next to their pets.
5. _____ Some dogs and cats are fed directly from the table and are given human food.
6. _____ There are special organizations in the US that protect the rights of animals and make sure that animals are not abused or mistreated.

ACTIVITY 5: *Father's Day*

Introduction:

Holidays are an important way in which cultures express themselves. One holiday that is not celebrated in all cultures is Father's Day.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the holiday of Father's Day by exploring an Internet site.
- Students will practice reading skills from a computer screen.
- Students will have a discussion about Father's Day in their country (if they have such a holiday) and about the roles that fathers play in their society.

Materials:

- An Internet lab with 1 computer for each student.
- The Internet site *Holidays on the Net* (<http://www.holidays.net/>)
- Handouts „[Father's Day Activity #1: Discussion Topics](#)” and „[Father's Day Activity #2: Internet Hunt for Information on Father's Day](#)”

Time: 45-60 minutes

Procedure:

1. In small groups students have a discussion about fathers and Father's Day-like holidays in their country by completing „[Father's Day Activity #1: Discussion Topics](#)”. This activity will get students thinking about the lives that fathers lead in their country and about any holidays that they know of like Father's Day in the US.
2. Student groups share their answers with the whole class.
3. Students log on to the Internet and complete the handout „[Father's Day Activity #2: Internet Hunt for Information on Father's Day](#)”, which leads them to explore the *Holidays on the Net* (<http://www.holidays.net>) web site to get information about Father's Day.
4. After students are finished with the worksheets the teacher asks individual students to share their answers with the class. The teacher makes sure that the class has the correct answers.
5. The teacher recaps the information so that all students understand the history and the way Father's Day is celebrated. (The teacher may also interject a personal description of what his family does for Father's Day.)
6. To wrap up, the teacher asks the class to make comments about what they have just learned. Students may talk about things that interested them or things that they thought were strange or very different from their countries.

Extension Activities:

- Student could explore the Internet for other sites containing information on Father's Day and present their findings to the class.
- Students could explore the Internet for information on other holidays and either present their ideas to the class or write an essay.
- Students could also write an essay comparing Father's Day in the US with a similar holiday in their culture.

Father's Day Activity #1: Discussion Topics

Instructions: Answer these questions in your group.

1. Is there a holiday in your country that celebrates Fathers? If not, do you have a similar holiday (such as Parent's Day)?
2. If you do have a day like Father's Day, how is it celebrated?
3. In your culture, what are a father's duties to his children? to his wife? to his parents? to his community?
4. How is your father's life different from his father's? his grandfather's? yours?
5. What does your father do?

6. What are your father's hobbies?
7. What makes a good father?
8. What makes a bad father?
9. How can you show your father you appreciate him?
10. Who is primarily responsible for rearing children in your culture?

Father's Day Activity #2: Internet Hunt for Information on Father's Day

Step 1: Go to:

Celebrating Father's Day: <http://www.holidays.net/father/index.htm>

Step 2:

Answer the following questions:

1. From the home page answer this question: What month is Father's Day in?
2. From the *Celebrating Father's day* link answer these questions:
 - a. Do fathers often receive ties for gifts on Father's Day?
 - b. Do fathers normally receive cards for Father's Day?
 - c. Would cooking your Father a meal be an acceptable gift for Father's Day?
 - d. Are sweets (chocolate, pie, cookies) acceptable gifts for Father's Day?
 - e. List some other things you think would be good gifts for Father's Day in the US.
3. From the *The Story of Father's Day* link answer these questions:
 - a. Who is attributed with starting Father's Day in the US?
 - b. Why did this person want to start Father's Day?
 - c. What do some people think about the founding of Father's Day?
 - d. When and where was the first Father's Day observed?
 - e. How did Father's Day become a national holiday in the US?
 - f. Officially, when is Father's Day?
 - g. What kinds of men, aside from fathers are honored on Father's Day?

ACTIVITY 6: Exploring American Culture Through Tall Tales

Introduction:

Tall tales appeared on the US literary scene in the 18th and 19th century as the country expanded.

The people who were doing the hard and dangerous work of nation building needed stories that made them feel better about the hardships they were facing. Because tall tales arose out of an experience that was so instrumental to the creation of American mythology, they are an excellent source of American culture. This series of activities uses tall tales to help students explore the importance of such key American values as individualism, entrepreneurship, self-reliance, thriftiness and strength. The tales will be taken from various Internet sources, which are listed below.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- Students will explore aspects American culture through the use of American Tall Tales.
- Students will come to understand the importance Americans place on individualism, entrepreneurship, self-reliance, thriftiness, and strength
- Students will practice reading, writing, summarizing, and listening.
- Students will practice and higher-level skills such as synthesizing, analyzing, and comparing.
- Students will practice analyzing literature.

Materials:

Web sites:

Paul Bunyan – <http://www.paulbunyantrail.com>

Pecos Bill - <http://pbskids.org/lions/pecos/index.html>

John Henry- http://www.ibiblio.org/john_henry/,
http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~motoya/J/John_Henry.html

Johnny Appleseed-

<http://www.ruralvermont.com/vermontweathervane/issues/fall/97009/appleseed.html>

Handouts: [Tall Tale handout #1](#), [Tall Tale handout #2](#)

Time: Day 1: 15 minutes

Day 2/3: 1 to 2 hours

Day 3: 45-60 minutes

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. Teacher asks the class if they have ever heard of "Tall Tales." The teacher elaborates on what the class knows by relating the history of American Tall Tales (see introduction of the activity). Additionally, the teacher points out that

- exaggeration was used heavily in these stories,

- that some of the stories were based on real people,
- almost all school children in the US learn them when they are young and that therefore they are an important part of American literature and therefore an integral part of American culture.
- through reading them one can gain insights into American culture.

2. Students are divided into 4 groups. Each group reads one story concerning each of the following characters: Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, John Henry, and Johnny Appleseed. The reading will be done on-line, based on the sites listed above.

3. The groups read each of the stories for homework and answers the questions on the „[Tall Tale Handout #1](#)” that concern their story.

Day 2/3:

1. In class each group compares their answers off of the handout.

2. Still in groups, the students are given enough time to organize a retelling of the story to the class. Each group member should take a part of the story to retell.

3. After each group finishes retelling their story, the class has the opportunity to ask the group questions in order to clarify any misunderstandings. Also, as each group is retelling each story the teacher may interject in order to add important things that the group may have missed.

4. As each group retells their story the others groups complete the questions for the other stories on „[Tall Tale Handout #1](#).”

5. After each group has finished telling their stories the class shares their answers from „[Tall Tale Handout #1](#)” with the group. This is to ensure that the class has come up with the right answers. The Teacher and the presenting group correct any mistakes and fill in any gaps from the class answers.

Day 4:

1. Teacher passes out „[Tall Tale Handout #2](#).” This is designed to get students thinking about what the stories can show about American culture. With a small group students answer the questions.

2. After the groups are finished answering the questions the teacher leads a whole class discussion. The things that students will hopefully come up with are American traits like individualism, entrepreneurship, thriftiness, self-reliance, conquering/domination of nature, and physical strength. If the class does not come up with these ideas on their own the teacher will scaffold the students to reach this answer.

3. The teacher then leads a class discussion about the American values reflected in each of the stories based on what the student have said. The teacher will make a list on the board of the key American traits represented and which story it can be seen in. (If the extension activity is done then students should write this down in their notebooks).

4. Finally, each small group discusses if the American values that were brought out through the stories are similar to their home cultures.

5. After each group has their discussions they present their findings to the class. This will

reinforce what the class has learned.

Extension Activities:

1. Students write an essay comparing two of the Tall Tales.
2. Students write an essay comparing the values reflected in the Tall Tales to values in their culture.
3. Students write tall tales from their own culture.

Tall Tale Handout #1

Paul Bunyan:

What are the physical characteristics of the main character in your story?

Describe the personality of the main character in your story?

What things did the main character do that are extraordinary.

Are there any things in the story that happened that are not possible? Make a list of them below:

Is there anything about this story that you think is particularly interesting?

Pecos Bill:

What are the physical characteristics of the main character in your story?

What are the personality characteristics of the main character in your story?

What things did the main character do that are extraordinary.

Are there any things in the story that happened that are not possible? Make a list of them below:

Is there anything about this story that you think is particularly interesting?

John Henry:

What are the physical characteristics of the main character in your story?

What are the personality characteristics of the main character in your story?

What things did the main character do that are extraordinary?

Are there any things in the story that happened that are not possible? Make a list of them below:

Is there anything about this story that you think is particularly interesting?

Johnny Appleseed:

What are the physical characteristics of the main character in your story?

What are the personality characteristics of the main character in your story?

What things did the main character do that are extraordinary.

Are there any things in the story that happened that are not possible? Make a list of them below:

Is there anything about this story that you think is particularly interesting?

Tall Tale Handout #2

Instructions: Before you answer the following questions read through your Tall Tale Handout #1. When you are finished answering the questions share your ideas with your group. Then chose someone from your group to present you answers to the class.

1. What can these stories tell you about US Culture? Make a list:
2. What things in the stories do you think are "American."
3. In US public schools, these stories are always taught. From a cultural standpoint, why do you think that these stories are taught to young US children?
4. In your experience with US culture, do you think that these stories reflect US cultural values?

ACTIVITY 7: UNIT WRAP UP

Introduction:

This activity brings the unit to a close and allows students to talk about how they have changed (if at all) and what they have learned.

The Activity:

Objectives:

- Students practice organizing, giving and listening to oral reports.
- Students will reflect on what they have learned about US culture, themselves and how they now view other cultures.

Materials:

- Handout „[Oral Presentation Assignment](#)”

Time: Will vary depending on the number of students.

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. For homework students prepare a brief oral presentation about what they have learned from participating in this unit. The presentation should be based on the information in the handout „[Oral Presentation Assignment](#).”

Day 2:

2. Students give their brief 5-minute talks. After each presentation the audience can ask questions.

3. After all students are finished a whole-class discussion is initiated. Student can talk about things that they felt about the unit that they did not mention in their oral presentations, such as things they would like to see implemented in the future.

Extension Activity:

- Students could search the Web for other sites pertaining to US culture and present them to the class.

ORAL PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to prepare a 5-10 minute talk about your experience with learning about US culture on the Internet. In your presentation you should include:

- An introduction explaining what the focus of your presentation will be.
- A description of what you learned about US culture from this unit. Be specific and use examples.
- A description of how you now view your own culture in relation to US culture. Be specific and use examples.
- What you liked and didn't like about the activities. Include your opinion about the content of the activities as well as context (i.e. using the Internet).
- A conclusion which wraps up what you think about either your culture, US culture, or the unit.

CONCLUSION

Doing activities like the ones described above can be a source of irritation for teachers. They may spend hours planning activities and designing lessons only to have something unexpected happen that throws off the entire lesson. Here are some potential problems that teachers might come across in implementing web based activities. I also offer some solutions.

Sometimes the sites that were up and running a few months ago have disappeared. Sometimes this is not discovered until a class is already under way. One solution is to have a backup, paper-based activity that accomplished a similar task – if possible. I have often found that students are quite understanding if technology fails a teacher. So an activity that isn't specifically in line with the day's lesson may also be used. Additionally, sites should be checked on a regular basis.

Another problem that is encountered is when students stall out. They reach a certain point in an activity and fail to go further. There are several reasons for this. One is a lack of understanding of the language they are asked to comprehend – either in the teacher's instructions or what they are seeing on screen. Although this cannot be totally avoided, teachers should consider this and do warm-up activities that activate background knowledge or teach new vocabulary before going to the computers.

I have often had the experience of some students surfing, chatting or checking email in class. The best solution is to remind students why they are in class. With adult and university students this usually gets them re-focused and on task. Additionally, activities can be adapted to be more open

ended to allow for the more advanced or creative students to remain engaged. Finally – you should know your students. Don't choose activities that you think they might find boring.

Another problem that some teachers might face is students who lack the technical experience to navigate web sites. Even though this is happening less and less, it can be remedied by pairing lower lever proficiency students with higher ones. Another solution is to make sure students understand that the teacher is there to help. Sometimes students get wrapped up in trying to find the solution themselves and forget that the teacher is there to help them. Make yourself available by circulating around the room.

All this is not to say that Web-based activities should be avoided. I have found that students are generally more interested in working with computers than with any other medium. And computer-based activities are often a good source of change in classroom routine. But most importantly, in the context of enhancing multiculturalism in the classroom, few things can compare to using the Internet as a source of first hand cultural material.

WEBSITES USED IN THE PAPER:

Activity 2:

- <http://www.valuhomecenters.com>
- <http://www.homedepot.com>
- <http://www.lowes.com>

Activity 3:

- Great Valley High School Main Page. <http://www.gvsd.org/gvhs>
- North Hagerstown High School's Home Page, Hagerstown, Maryland, USA, <http://www.wcboe.k12.md.us/mainfold/schoopag/high/nhhpage/>
- Bronx High School of Science. <http://www.bxscience.edu>
- Todd County High School Home Page. <http://www.tcsdk12.org/TCHS/tchshome.htm>

Additionally see : <http://highschoolhub.org/hub/hschools.cfm>

Activity 4:

- PETsMART (<http://www.petsmart.com>)
- Petco (<http://www.petco.com>).

Activity 5:

- <http://www.holidays.net>

Activity 6:

- Paul Bunyan – <http://www.paulbunyantrail.com>
- Pecos Bill - <http://pbskids.org/lions/pecos/index.html>

- **John Henry**- http://www.ibiblio.org/john_henry/,
http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~motoya/J/John_Henry.html,
- **Johnny Appleseed**-
<http://www.ruralvermont.com/vermontweathervane/issues/fall/97009/appleseed.html>

A WORD FROM A TECHIE

SPEEDING UP THE WEB – USING SLOW-CONNECTION INTERNET IN THE CLASSROOM

by Jarek Krajka

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In my experiences with Internet-assisted language learning, I have encountered numerous problems: it was hard to schedule a computer lab for my English classes, I had too many students per each workstation, my students' level of English was too low to work on authentic websites. However, the most painful problem of my online classroom was a slow connection. I have decided to devote this month's "A Word from a Techie" to this problem, which is quite widespread in Poland, with still underresourced schools, a problem which can effectively destroy even the most brilliant and interesting Web-based lesson.

Thus, the question arises: what can we do if our Net works at a speed of a turtle rather than a hare? There are numerous solutions, either calling for appropriate task formulation, requiring teacher's preparation or using dedicated software.

In case of a slow file transfer, the teacher should reformulate his ideas for the lesson and forget about using Internet search engines such as Yahoo or Altavista. Search engines, after having typed in a keyword to be found, browse millions of pages all over the world, which obviously lasts a lot of time, and therefore it will take long to get a search result. This can be a serious problem in case of a slow-connection classroom, as students, when having nothing to do, are likely to lose interest in the lesson or disrupt the class. In order to prevent that, the teacher might do the search before and save the site with results (either using „Save as” from the File menu or using the „save for offline viewing” option), so that students have the links to explore, without having to wait for the search result. In this way, the precious classroom time is not wasted for unnecessary waiting. Another option here would be to use the time when the search engine looks for sites for some other activities connected with the theme of the lesson, either computer tasks (composing the presentation, writing a story in a word-processor or writing an email letter) or language ones (speaking practice in pairs, whole-class vocabulary focus, grammar revision). However, since it is hard to predict how much time the search would take, the first solution (saving the results site) is recommended as more effective and time-saving.

The reformulation of the ideas for the lesson should not only concern the avoidance of using the search engine. Also, the teacher should try to make the lesson around one or two websites, exploiting their content in different ways, rather than ask students to make multiple searches and using a number of websites. In this way, once a website is loaded, it may be used without any further waste of time.

Another important problem in a slow connection classroom is that students choose to go to sites

which load a long time. Of course, the loading time depends on a number of factors, with the most important being the Internet traffic, but this problem can be also tackled. Some solution would be for the teacher to preview the sites and give students only those which load fairly quickly, and in this way prevent them from wasting time exploring a number of sites before getting to the right one. It is not my intention to introduce teacher control here – students should be still given the choice of a few websites, but the teacher should make sure that students spend their time learning, and not waiting for a page to load with growing frustration. Teachers should remember that sites which load faster are those with more text and less graphics, banners, ads or pictures. Also, faster-to-load pages use less sophisticated interface, do not have Java applets or CGI scripts.

Another solution here would be turning off loading images, sounds and animations (for MS Internet Explorer, click on „Tools”, then „Options”, „Advanced” and unselect „Show images”, „Play animations”, „Play sounds”), and consequently students would get a desired website only with text, without the pictures, animated banners or accompanying sounds. Of course, this will surely help with the loading time, but on the other hand the attractiveness of Internet websites, meant as a complete whole integrating text, picture, video and sound, would lose a lot of its appeal. Thus, teachers should remember that when turning off loading of some elements of the website, they distort to some extent the picture of the Web.

Moreover, it has been noticed that the site’s domain is also connected with the loading time, and sites with .com ending (registered in the USA) are usually much slower to load than sites with some country ending, such as .uk, .it or .fr. Having this in mind, the teacher could try to find the equivalents of .com-only sites (as is the case with Web portals for instance, where <http://uk.yahoo.com> is the British version of www.yahoo.com, and the UK portal is much quicker to load than the other one).

Most computer labs have computers connected in a Local Area Network and are equipped with a proxy server, which stores the recently viewed sites on the server and once a page is requested by typing the URL in the browser, the proxy server retrieves the page from the server, checking only whether it has changed or not. Thus, the proxy server can be used to speed up working with the Web – the teacher may come to the lab before the class, access a few sites that students will be working on, and when coming to class students will find it much quicker to get the requested sites. Of course, here some predicting on the part of the teacher is needed, as he or she must try to guess what subpages students might be interested in. Loading the sites before the lesson and using the proxy server to retrieve them quickly by all computers in the LAN proved to be one of the most effective techniques speeding up the Web in my case, and is recommended to teachers as easy and effective.

Finally, it may happen that the connection is so bad that waiting for websites to load takes ages, or that it is impossible to use the Internet because the school does not have money to pay for the connection time. In such a case, some solution would be to save some selected sites before class and load them for students to use in class. This can be done in various ways: using „Save as” option, saving a site for offline viewing (click on „Add to bookmarks” in „Bookmarks” menu, then select „Show in offline mode”) or using specialised offline viewers, which capture selected websites to the hard disc of the computer going as deep as it is specified. Of course, before doing that, the teacher should make sure that this does not break the copyright law of the websites chosen, and in case of doubt should email the webmaster/website owner to seek permission, stressing the purely educational, single-classroom and non-commercial purpose behind his/her request. However, it must be remembered that this solution should be used only as a last resort, as the main benefits of Internet-assisted instruction are variety and choice given to students. When the teacher makes decisions for students on what is going to be viewed, students are no

longer autonomous, and the whole idea of Web-based learning is distorted.

To sum up, it can be seen that slow-connection Internet is no obstacle impossible to overcome for teachers wanting to provide their students with some experience of online learning. Definitely, working with slow file transfer is not easy, and sometimes demands clever tricks to make the lesson feasible. However, using the techniques discussed above the teacher may conduct interesting Web-based lessons using limited and outdated resources.

WEBSITE REVIEWS

READING COMPREHENSION ONLINE

Virtual Language Centre, English Zone.com, University of Victoria English Language Centre Study Zone, Comenius English Language Centre, The New York Times on the Web

by Jarek Krajka

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After reviewing sites facilitating writing instruction in the previous issue of *Teaching English with Technology*, this month I have decided to familiarise readers with a few websites that can be used in teaching reading skills. Reading, just as listening, is a skill whose mastery requires ample practice. The classroom instruction rarely provides that – students are of different language level, of different vocabulary level, their reading speed differs. Coursebooks do not give enough reading practice for obvious reasons of limited space. Thus, the Web may be the solution.

The main advantages of online reading activities are the following:

- access at any time, in any place, for unlimited number of times, for unlimited time, without any charge
- great abundance of topics to choose from, so every student may find something interesting
- most sites are fully interactive, in that they check students' answers, give correct ones and provide feedback on incorrect ones
- due to these factors, students are able to develop their reading skills without the teacher, providing they have the access to the Internet.

What follows is a brief account of a few Internet websites devoted to reading comprehension. I would like to acknowledge here the fact that the sites given below were brought up on the international TESLCA-L discussion list by Birgit Ferran (October 9, 2001) and Christine Bauer-Ramazani (October 9, 2001).

<http://vlc.polyu.edu.hk/comp/Readcomp.htm> is a part of Hong Kong Virtual Language Centre maintained by Chris Greaves (<http://vlc.polyu.edu.hk/default.htm>). The site contains reading comprehension activities based on authentic texts taken from South China Morning Post and created by Eric Collins. When accessing the page, a student has at his disposal 34 reading comprehension activities on various topics such as computers, religion, nuclear weapons, unemployment, protecting the environment or teenagers. All texts can be accessed either in a practice or test mode. When choosing any text in any mode, a user gets a screen divided into three windows. In the top one, he can see the text to read. The text has some words underlined,

and clicking on them brings the dictionary definition. Under the text, some selected phrases are explained for the reader. In the bottom left window, there are multiple choice exercises to be done while reading. In the practice mode, there are buttons referring to each possible answer, and by clicking on them one can see which answer is right and which is wrong. In the test mode, each exercise concludes with a „Submit test” button. By clicking on it, one gets a detailed score sheet for a given test, with such pieces of information as the name of the test, the date, the score out of the total score, the correct answer for each question and the answer given by the user, finally the score for each question. The test is checked instantly, and the learner may get back to the text and work on it to see why some of the answers were wrong.

The website is fully interactive and can be used by students on their own thanks to the „Active Dictionary” feature of the pages. By double-clicking on any word from the text a reader can look up its meaning in a web dictionary, which opens in the bottom right corner of the page. The information given comprises the meaning of the word, its category, the example sentences, links to entries of other words of similar or opposite meaning.

Apart from typical multiple-choice reading exercises, one can find also two other types of reading activities, that is cloze tests, where a user reads a text and needs to fill in the gaps with correct words, and jumbled texts, which are activities using Java technology, where the user is asked to reorder the jumbled text using copy, cut and paste commands.

On the whole, the site is strongly recommended as extremely innovative, comprehensive and fully interactive reading comprehension resource. The especially noteworthy feature is the „Active Dictionary”, allowing users to get the meaning of unknown words in a moment.

English Zone.com, <http://english-zone.com/>, also has a section devoted to practising reading skills online, namely a reading zone, <http://english-zone.com/reading/index.html>. The site is divided into levels (all students, intermediate+ and advanced), and for each one there are a few online reading comprehension tasks. The topics of the text are engaging for students (birthday, friendship, US presidents), and the tasks are usually multiple choice questions. As was the case with the previous site, also here a reader gets the text in one scrollable window while questions in the other. Here, the test is checked immediately, that is after choosing a wrong answer the user gets instant message about that. Thus, there is no possibility to practise reading in a test mode, as there is no scorekeeping and checking after having done the whole test. As for dictionary help, there is a link to Merriam Webster’s online dictionary, but it is on the index page, and there is no dictionary link on reading activities sites. However, a strong advantage that needs to be noted here is that some of the activities are intended for printing and using offline in class, because each is just one long screen, and the owner of the website grants „limited permission ... to make copies of this page for use in classroom teaching only”.

University of Victoria English Language Centre Study Zone, <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/index.htm> features a section focusing on practising and testing reading skills online. Here again one can choose the level (200, 330, 410, 490, 570 and Extras), which is probably ambiguous to users from all over the world, but certainly corresponds to the types of classes held at the English Language Centre. Among the materials available for a given level there is usually the reading section, where one can find different stories with exercises (for level 200 it was „A special Christmas present” and „Two sisters and a cat”). In this website each story is used for different purposes, e.g. first for multiple-choice reading comprehension activities, then for recreating a story by choosing one of the three sentences proposed, working on vocabulary in a gap-fill activity, where students need to put the clozed words into the right place in the story or summarising the story in an open cloze task. The texts on higher levels (e.g., 410) are also accompanied by grammar exercises and write-a-summary exercises. Of course, the site is fully interactive in the sense that the answers to the reading tasks

are instantly evaluated, and summaries written by students can also be submitted for correction. Though prepared for a given audience from University of Victoria courses, materials can be certainly used by other teachers and learners.

Fluency through fables (<http://www.comenius.com/fables/index.tpl>) is the reading comprehension section of the Comenius English Language Centre website (<http://www.comenius.com/index.tpl>). Here students can work on comprehension of 7 short texts (fables), which are accompanied by various exercises testing their comprehension. Among these one can find vocabulary matching exercises, vocabulary completion exercises, multiple choice comprehension exercises, written discussion exercises, true or false comprehension exercises. The user can get the questions evaluated by the website, and repeat the reading activity to see what was wrong or right. The advantage of the site lies in the fact that it uses short texts, which is a good option for lower-level classes or for teachers having less time at their disposal. However, the users would definitely benefit from a greater number of materials or some dictionary help.

Similar sites: Folktales from Around the World, <http://www.otan.dni.us/webfarm/emailproject/folk.htm> (texts only, without exercises), National Geographic Grimm Brothers Tales, <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/>.

The New York Times on the Web, <http://www.nytimes.com/>, has its huge section devoted to learning English, namely „learning network” - <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/>. The site menu on the left is divided into three sections: Student Connections, Teacher Connections and Parent Connections. Teachers can benefit from a daily lesson plan, based on relevant New York Times articles, as well as access lesson plans archived on the site and browse them by subject, by keyword or by grade range. Each lesson plan is carefully developed and laid out, listing such information as grades, subjects, overview of the lesson, time allowance, objectives, and resources/materials. Teachers get a step-by-step instruction on what to do in the classroom, together with further questions for discussion, evaluation/assessment, useful vocabulary, extension activities (making use of the Web), notes on interdisciplinary connections and annotated links to other relevant sites on the Web. What is more, the plan concludes with a specification of state standards for each grade of education, so that teachers from other countries could try to adapt the given plans to their levels of education.

The site has a number of advantages: a huge collection of lesson plans, detailed and sound methodological approach, interesting and engaging materials to work on, but probably its greatest strength lies in currency: students work on the most up-to-date materials, and consequently they are going to be more motivated than working with a few-year-old coursebook texts.

Other sites of this type: CNN Learning Resources, <http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/archives.html>; MSNBC News for Children, <http://www.msnbc.com/local/pencilnews/default.asp>, BBC World Service Learning English page, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml>.

To sum up, it can be said that the sites discussed above show the great potential of the Web for developing and delivering language learning materials. It is easy not only to put materials online, so that students can access them at any time and as often as they wish, but also to set up automatic evaluation and scorekeeping schemes. Thanks to that, students can get as much practice as they need to in reading comprehension, using most current, interactive and interesting materials.

SOFTWARE REVIEW

LONGMAN INTERACTIVE ENGLISH DICTIONARY (LIED) – 2nd Edition

by Anita Czech

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Publisher: Pearson Education Limited, 2000.

Product type: electronic dictionary

Language: English

Level: intermediate to advanced, teachers, students

Media format: CD-ROM

Operating System: PC: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT; Macintosh: OS7.0

Hardware requirements: **PC:** Pentium IBM-compatible PC, 16 MB RAM, VGA 256-colour monitor, MPC compatible audio board (e.g. Soundblaster) + loudspeakers, 4X speed CD-ROM drive; **MAC:** Power MAC, 16 RAM, 8 bit 256 colour display, 4X speed CD-ROM

Description

The CD-ROM is based on the well-known Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. It includes the entries with definitions of over 80,000 words and phrases. Apart from that, the programme also contains 15,000 references to people, places, events and organisations from the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture.

The Dictionary also comprises an essential guide to English grammar, which can be used to help learners study new language areas, as well as review and practise language. The guide is based on L.G. Alexander's *Longman English Grammar* and *Longman English Grammar Practice*, which is probably the best recommendation.

"Longman Verbs", another LIED section, contains conjugations of all the verbs appearing in the dictionary, which allows the user to check the spelling and increase grammatical accuracy.

Apart from the above features, the dictionary also encompasses "Common Errors" section, which can help learners avoid making common mistakes, especially with their homework. This part of the dictionary is based on the acclaimed *Longman Dictionary of Common Errors* by N.D. Turton and J.B. Heaton.

Definitions are illustrated by 650 drawings, photos and maps – many in colour. Some of the pictures have labels to show exactly what a particular part of the item being illustrated is called. Thanks to that, by clicking on a picture a user can learn new words in full context of a picture, increasing the retention of vocabulary.

Also, the dictionary contains 8 videos, each illustrating certain grammar structures used in real-life situations. In this section the user can extend vocabulary, improve written English and practise listening comprehension. It needs to be noted that it is possible to follow the dialogue in the script as the video is playing, which can be really helpful in self-study learning at home as well as in class activities.

Apart from these features, the programme is also equipped with "Exercise bank" part, where learners of English can choose among over 2,000 multiple-choice, cloze text, error correction and key-word transformation exercises. They include also the FCE, CAE and the CPE tests (based on *Practice Tests for FCE and CAE* and *Test yourself for Proficiency* by S. Morris and A. Stanton), which can be used either in class or at home.

It is also worth mentioning that the programme contains 10 tables giving general information such as numbers, weights and measures.

In "Features", the last section of the dictionary, learners can enjoy reading extra information on topic areas such as Education, Christmas or Shakespeare's Plays.

In the crucial part of the programme, the A-Z dictionary, the user may find a definition of a given word and listen to its pronunciation. It needs to be emphasised that all the databases are fully interlinked, which enables quick and easy access to the information one needs. Apart from the pronunciation of a given word, the user can, by clicking on appropriate buttons of the database icons, look at a relevant picture, see some related words, study a related grammar point, and play a video. If someone does not understand a word from the definition, he may double-click on it and a new dictionary window will appear containing the entry for that word. In this way it is much easier to use this dictionary than a traditional one.

It should also be noted that the dictionary is well-integrated with other programmes, so it can be instant help when writing in the word-processor, using email or surfing the Internet. Also, entries can be copied to the word-processing programme and most of its parts can be printed.

Another important feature is "Internet Update". It allows the user to download new dictionary entries and pictures into the programme. "Collection menu" offers other facilities, namely it allows the learner to group together a number of entries, which can be saved on a hard disc or a floppy disk for future use. It can be very useful for somebody who is working on a project, preparing for an exam or somebody who just wants to review vocabulary.

The learner is also given the chance to find information by using the Search facility. It could be done in different ways: by date search, text or headword search. The "Date search" section allows the user to search for groups of famous people who were born in particular year. In the "Text search", on the other hand, one can search for each occurrence of a given word in the entire dictionary, as well as extract all the entries containing this word in their definition. The last type of search, "Headword search", lets learners of English find all the dictionary entries containing a particular word or pattern of letters.

Evaluation

When compared with the traditional resources, LIED turns out to be an extremely quick and useful reference tool. The users can not only look up a particular word in a matter of a second, but they can also hear its pronunciation, see it in a picture or in the video script. Moreover, the "linking feature" enables learners to achieve grammatical information about the word or words one is looking at, to study the "Common Errors" section and even to practise grammar by doing exercises in "Exercise bank" part. It is needless to say that no book dictionary can provide the users of English with such friendly, easy and fast access to information of different kinds. It must

be said that, in fact, it is not only a dictionary but also a grammar reference and practice book, a picture book and even a video programme. Thanks to that, it is almost a infinite source of getting information about the language. Also, due to integration with other Windows programs, it can be used for instant lookup of words in an Internet website, an email message or a word-processor document.

The programme is clear and easy to use, with intuitive icons and well-known commands. It also has an extensive help section. For these reasons, it can be used by students at home, in a self-study mode. As for the possible applications of the dictionary in teaching English, I am absolutely convinced that it can be a great help in the classroom. While teaching the whole class the teacher can use the section containing conjugations of the verbs and practise grammar in the "Exercise bank" part. In groups, on the other hand, pupils can practise listening comprehension by watching the video section. Then, the real-life situations in the video mini-dramas can be a nice introduction to speaking practice activities.

When compared with other electronic dictionaries, it needs to be emphasised that with LIED it is possible to download new entries and updates from the Internet. Obviously, this is not a frequent tendency among electronic dictionaries nowadays, as ELT publishers generally prefer to update them by releasing a new updated edition, forcing the users to pay once more.

As for some drawbacks of LIED dictionary in relation to other programmes, it needs to be mentioned that it lacks a variety of vocabulary exercises and games. It seems that the dictionary database and the computer capabilities could be used to produce vocabulary activities, so that after having looked up a given word or phrase a learner could practise using it in context.

As regards the Search facility, it seems to be quite an advanced procedure. However, it does not have the system of "filters" which is used in other electronic dictionaries. In these programmes the user may, for example, set a part-of-speech filter (where one can choose parts of speech for the wanted word), register filter (old-fashioned, slang, taboo, etc.), or geographical filter (British or American English). Such sophisticated search capabilities would be certainly welcome by more advanced users of the program doing semantic research.

Recommendation

To sum up, it must be said that despite some minor weaknesses, *Longman Interactive English Dictionary* is a product worth recommending for the following reasons. Undoubtedly, it is an extremely effective, easy and fast reference tool. It needs to be emphasised that the programme is really interactive because it is possible to learn with it, and not just to look up unknown words. Also, apart from facilitating students' work at home, it is flexible enough to be adapted for classroom conditions, and introducing it can bring novelty to traditional teaching methods.

To conclude, I heartily recommend this programme to anybody who takes learning English seriously. It really has been expertly and skilfully prepared to match the needs of learners of English in the era of computers and the Internet.

REPORTS FROM PAST EVENTS

PALC'01

3RD BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN LANGUAGE CORPORA

by Ela Gajek

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3rd Biennial International Conference on Practical Applications in Language Corpora PALC'01 was held at the Lodz University Conference Centre in Lodz on September 7-10, 2001. The event was organised by the Department of English Language of the University of Lodz, Poland. Organising Committee: Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, Stanisław Goźdz-Roszkowski, Krzysztof Kredens.

Plenaries and papers covered various aspects of creating corpora and using them in linguistics, research, translation and teaching. Although computers have become smaller and data stored on them have become easily accessed to teachers and learners, corpus-based approach to learning a foreign language is still not very popular. On the one hand, it may develop learner autonomy and working on authentic language. 'Authentic' texts require both teachers and learners to cope with language which textbooks do not predict. On the other hand, corpus-based approach encourages changing the roles of teachers and learners. Learners, previously taught in a directive rule-based way, may have serious difficulty in studying excerpts from an authentic corpus, while teachers may find this approach time consuming.

I have selected some papers which may be of particular interest of English teachers.

Guy Aston, University of Bologna, Italy, in his plenary „Learning English with Corpora: the BNC experience” presented plenty of ideas on how to use a corpus for solving language problems, developing reading, oral/written reporting and also contradicting teachers and textbook writers. He recommended BNC as a reference exploration tool which provides deeper processing, more memorable results and more serendipity in learning. However, students may discover that working with it takes more time, needs harder work and gives less definite answers.

Prof. John Osborne, University of Savoy, France, in his plenary „Integrating Corpora into a Language-Learning Syllabus” suggested gradual introducing corpus data into language learning in order to enhance language awareness of advanced students. In his opinion, working with corpora "helps learners resolve conflicts in their linguistic knowledge, by noticing discrepancies not only between their own language use and that of native speakers, but also between their representations - beliefs about the language - and their observations of target language usage".

Maria Ciesielska-Ciupek, University of Lodz, Poland, presented a paper entitled „Preparation of ELT Materials Using the Internet and Corpus Resources”. Firstly, she dealt with the theoretical aspect of computer-based teaching materials. Then she showed selected examples of teaching materials additional to learners' textbooks. All the materials come from the Internet and language

corpora. Eventually, she analysed students' test results and discussed data gathered in a learner evaluation sheet.

Agnieszka Leńko Szymańska, University of Lodz, Poland, in her presentation „Lexical Problem Areas in Advanced Learner Corpus of Written Data”, showed an example of a learner corpus of 69 essays written by fourth-year students of the Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz. She discussed some aspects of error analysis and recent studies on lexical errors. Also, she presented the quantitative analysis of students' errors based on the corpus, coming to the conclusion that "collocations should be focused on in the classroom ... to make teaching collocation more effective".

A 10-million sample of the PELCRA corpus of Polish was on sale during the conference. The event was also accompanied by a book exhibition by OPTIMUS.

IATEFL POLAND COMPUTER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP MEETING

AT THE ANNUAL IATEFL POLAND CONFERENCE

by Ela Gajek

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Members of IATEFL PL Computer SIG met on the 24th September 2001 at the Annual IATEFL PL Conference in Warsaw. 20 people attended the meeting.

1. Ela Gajek opened the session and briefly presented the SIG's main activities:

Last year was very successful for Computer SIG.

- The number of members increased from 6 to 30.
- *Teaching English with Technology* journal reached the number of 5 issues. It is developing in quality and popularity.
- The EastEuropean Computer SIG Conference, held in Gliwice in June 2001, was a great success.
- Our website was kept updated.
- The discussion list was very helpful in keeping the members informed about the SIG's activities.
- European teachers co-operation started within Schoolnet programme.
- Evaluation of Multimedia Distance Specialised English Course was an unexpected occasion for some Computer SIG members to share their experience and develop professionally.

Last year Computer SIG was sponsored and supported by many companies, publishers and institutions. They helped to promote ICT among language teachers, organise courses and the

conference. We are grateful for their help and engagement. Wojciech Drajerczak, a representative of The British Council Poland, and Marek Wozniak, representing Macmillan Polska, who attended the meeting, declared their constant support for the SIG in the following year.

2. Jarek Krajka presented *Teaching English with Technology* Journal in detail encouraging the SIG members to participate more actively in its creation by writing lesson scenarios, reviews and articles.

3. Ela Gajek suggested plans for the coming year.

- The group plans to meet three times next year: in January 2002 in Poznan, in March 2002 in Warsaw and in June 2002.
- The TEwT Journal, the website and the discussion list should be continued with greater participation of SIG members.
- The cooperation between Teacher Development and Autonomous Learning SIG and Computer SIG is going to be developed. It will bring fruit to both, as CALL may develop autonomy, and autonomous learners may use technology more effectively in their learning.
- In order to start the co-operation between Computer SIG and TDAL SIG Jarek Krajka visited TDAL SIG to present our activities and Zofia Grudzińska from the TDAL SIG presented their activities to us.

4. Zofia Grudzińska presented Teacher Development and Autonomous Learning SIG, their newsletter and web site (<http://www.iatefl.org.pl/sig/al/news.html>) and encouraged the Computer SIG members to visit the website. Also, she suggested organising a joint event in March or June 2002, which was accepted by SIG members.

5. At the end Ela Gajek encouraged all members to share their experience and expertise with others.

Although the meeting was very short, the group managed to present last year's activities and show perspectives and areas for further development.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FUTURE EVENTS

CALICO 2002

CREATING VIRTUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

University of California, Davis

Davis, California, USA

March 26 - March 30, 2002

Preconference Workshops: Tuesday, March 26 - Wednesday, March 27

Courseware Showcase: Thursday, March 28 (tentative)

Presentation Sessions: Thursday, March 28 - Saturday, March 30

Proposals should address new technologies, innovative software, research projects, or new uses for old software. Presentations for all levels of expertise--from newcomers to experts--will be considered. Use CALICO's proposal submission form at <http://calico.org/CALICO02> or request a text version of the form at info@calico.org

For more information, contact

CALICO

214 Centennial Hall, Southwest Texas State University

601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666 USA

Phone: (512) 245-1417, Fax: (512) 245-9089 E-mail: info@calico.org

TESOL 2002 ELECTRONIC VILLAGE SPECIAL EVENTS

TESOL 2002: "LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT"

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

April 9-11, 2002

INTERNET FAIR, SOFTWARE FAIR and DEVELOPERS SHOWCASE

You are invited to submit a proposal for participation in one or more of these TESOL 2002 CALL Interest Section Special Events, according to the guidelines below. Submit a separate proposal for each demonstration you wish to be considered for. You are welcome to submit proposals to more than one event, and it is possible to have more than one proposal accepted (depending on space availability and quality of the submission). Windows and Macintosh

equipment will be available at no charge, along with CD ROM drives, Internet connections, and (for the Showcase only) projection equipment. Plan to bring a minimum of 100 handouts per Fair/Showcase acceptance slot -- these are very popular events!

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE FAIRS: Presenters have approximately 20-30 minutes to demonstrate their material. Participants walk around and drop in and out of demonstrations, thus precluding highly structured presentations. A demonstration may be repeated a second time (an additional 20 to 25 minutes), if interest warrants and space allows. You can submit a proposal to either Fair online at <http://www2.iei.uiuc.edu/Evproposals/>.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE SHOWCASE: There is one presenter at a time, demonstrating her/his program. Seating is provided for the audience. See below for how to submit a proposal to the Developers Showcase.

INTERNET FAIR Coordinator: John Skinner Email: JSkinner@northland.edu Please submit your proposal(s) for the Internet Fair online at <http://www2.iei.uiuc.edu/Evproposals/>
SOFTWARE FAIR Coordinator: Susanne McLaughlin Email: smclaugh@roosevelt.edu Please submit your proposal(s) for the Software Fair online at <http://www2.iei.uiuc.edu/Evproposals/>

DEVELOPERS SHOWCASE Coordinator: John E. Lackstrom Email: fat88@cc.usu.edu

Please read the submission information at <http://www2.iei.uiuc.edu/Evproposals/CFP2002.html> and contact John Lackstrom at fat88@cc.usu.edu

COMPUTERS AND WRITING 2002

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN VIRTUAL SPACES

Normal, Illinois, USA

May 16-19, 2002

The Conference on Computers and Writing invites proposals for its eighteenth annual conference, May 16-19, 2002. Hosted by Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, the conference theme is "Teaching and Learning in Virtual Spaces."

The conference will explore the ways in which computers are changing how we conceive of and deal with problems of accessibility in writing instruction, especially as these problems hinge on the relationship between the virtual and the physical. What are the differences between reading a virtual and a physical text? Do we assess writing in virtual space and writing embodied in a physical document differently? Do the modes of virtual access (MOOs, web boards, listservs) pose problems for the uninitiated that makes learning in virtual space more intimidating than learning in the physical classroom? When learning in virtual and physical space are combined, what principles inform the combination? How are traditionally disenfranchised students (the physically disabled, the economically disadvantaged) affected by the availability of virtual instruction?

We solicit proposals for individual presentations, panels, round tables, and half day or full day workshops, that extend and explore issues of technology and teaching. Please submit proposals via the online application located at the conference website:

<http://www.lilt.ilstu.edu/english/cw2002/>

**THE NINETEENTH CONFERENCE ON ENGLISH TEACHING &
LEARNING IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

Shi-Hsin University, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

June 8, 2002

Conference Theme: Trends of English Language Teaching in the Information Age

Participants from all settings of TESOL and related fields are invited to submit proposals. Important factors for successful proposals include the clarity of purpose, succinctness, appropriateness, research quality, and significance for the intended audience. All proposals will be subject to a blind review by the Conference Selection Committee. The committee reserves the right to turn down proposals for presentations without assigning reasons.

TOPICS ENCOURAGED

1. Curriculum and Instruction
2. Assessment
3. Language, literature, and culture
4. Multimedia-assisted language teaching
5. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
6. English Teaching in various levels of education
7. Other English teaching and learning issues

TYPES OF PROPOSALS

Proposals for three types of presentations are being solicited:

- a. Papers (30 minutes): lecture presentations to a formal audience.
- b. Workshops (40 minutes for demonstrations, 20 minutes for discussion): activities carefully structured by the leader.
- c. Poster sessions (30-60 minutes): self-explanatory exhibit on a large display board.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The one-page abstract (do not exceed 200 words) should include a synopsis of the paper, a central idea, supporting evidence, and a conclusion. Prepare three copies of the abstract, one with the author's name and affiliation under the title, while the other two without any identifying information. The abstract should be processed with Microsoft Word 6.0 or above, double-spaced (12 point), typed in font Times New Roman. Please use endnote, instead of footnote if you typed with Microsoft Word. The title should appear on the first line and be limited to 10 words. Also submit a diskette containing your abstract in a version of Word, and the completed proposal form to the following address (English or Chinese) by the November 29, 2001 deadline.

Please contact Prof. Peng-hsiang Chen, or Prof. Yi-ju Chen

The Nineteenth Conference on English Teaching and Learning in the ROC

Department of English, Shih-Hsin University

Address: 1 Lane 17, Mu-cha Road, Sec. 1, Taipei 116

TEL: (02)2236-8225 ext. 731/732/734 FAX: (02)2236-7159

E-mail: dteng@cc.shu.edu.tw or yjchen@cc.shu.edu.tw

ISTAS'02

2002 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

June 6-8, 2002

The goal of ISTAS'02 is to bring together Information and Communication Technology (ICT) professionals, computer science and engineering educators, teachers and scholars in the humanities and social sciences, policymakers, students, and ICT users for the purpose of establishing critical dialogue on the social and ethical dimensions of ICT.

We encourage contributions for topics related to the conference theme:

Electronic publishing

ICT and democratic processes

Intellectual property rights in the digital era

Universal access/Digital divide

Social implications of wireless technology

Gender issues in ICT

Equitable access for the disadvantaged and the disabled

Misuse of ICT

National and international ICT policy

Distance education

Web-based resources for teaching ethics in computing

Information security and privacy

Free speech and censorship

ICT and high-risk systems

Social implications of electronic commerce

ICT and developing countries

We also welcome papers in additional general areas of interest to the members of SSIT: environmental, health, safety, and peace-related implications of technology; social, economic, and ethical issues involving energy, information, and telecommunications technologies; history of technology; systems analysis in public policy decisions; and research methods for technology-policy analysis.

Submit a one page abstract for a paper, or a proposal for a paper session or panel discussion to the Conference Chair (email preferred):

Joseph R. Herkert, Division of Multidisciplinary Studies

Box 7107, North Carolina State University

Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7107

voice: 919-515-7993; fax: 919-515-1828; email: joe_herkert@ncsu.edu

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

"Teaching English with Technology" (ISSN 1642-1027) is a bi-monthly 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 (Lesson Plans, A Word from a Techie, Software Reviews)
- Jozsef Horvath (University of Pecs, Pecs, Hungary) – Editor (Articles)
- Maria Jose Luzon de Marco (University of Zaragoza, Spain) – Editor (The Internet and ESP)
- Marek Wozniak (Macmillan Polska, Warsaw, Poland) – Editor (Website Reviews)

To subscribe to "Teaching English with Technology," write to: Jarek Krajka, Editor, at jkrajka@batory.plo.lublin.pl In the Subject line, write: Subscription Request. You can also get the journal from the IATEFL Computer SIG website at this URL: <http://www.iatefl.org.pl/sig/call/callnl.htm>, where the past issues can also be accessed.

The next issue of "Teaching English with Technology" will be published in January 2002. Submission deadline for the next issue is December 15, 2001.

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 and 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
- 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
- Website review: 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 review: descriptions, evaluations and recommendations of widely available language learning software
- 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 jkrajka@batory.plo.lublin.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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