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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

by Jarek Krajka

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The growth of interest in technology is apparent not only in the number of websites springing up around the world, but in its practical applications in all spheres of life. It is beyond doubt that computers and the Internet can add enormous potential to language teaching and learning, providing that teachers and learners know how to make the most of technology.

Few people would doubt the importance of the Internet to language learning. What is a concern at the moment, at least in Poland, is that really few teachers of subjects other than Information Technology know how to use the Internet and computers to enhance and aid teaching their subjects. With big funds pumped into technology, the field which is neglected is teachers and teacher training in the field of ICT. It is more than likely that very soon the problem of technology, the lack of computers or bad or slow Internet connection will cease to exist, but the problem of inexperienced teachers, not confident in the use of computers and the Internet to teach their subjects, not aware of the possible merits technology could bring to their teaching, will be a serious obstacle on the road towards online learning.

“Teaching English with Technology,” a new journal for teachers using technology, computers and the Internet in their teaching, tries to address these issues by publishing practical articles, plans of lessons actually done in the classroom, reviews of websites having potential for organising lessons or relevant in some way to teachers or learners, reviews of language learning software, tips of advice on using computer programmes in teaching and learning, reports from past events, announcements of future events and news. It is the intention of the editor to make this journal a publishing forum for teachers, so as to give them the chance to share their experiences and ideas with the professional community, even if this is just a single lesson plan or a classroom technique. My experience shows that teachers need a journal like this to feel rewarded, sometimes to meet the demands of publications imposed by school administration. Therefore, the journal is meant to be very practical, useful and set in school reality, rather than theoretical and academic. Consequently, having teachers as readers in mind, we will accept short practical articles, lesson plans and website reviews.

Obviously, the reality of Polish schools may be very much different from the reality of the USA, Spain or Australia, but what is common to us all is on the one hand the same objective – to teach the same language, English, and on the other hand the same teaching medium – the Internet and computers. The existence of the Internet, with websites and email communication, with instant access and fast searching, with its variety of interesting, authentic, appealing materials in every sphere of life, creates enormous opportunities to make our teaching more realistic, lively and interactive. We can give our students the real purpose to learn – the real purpose to write, to read, to listen or speak using the Internet. We need to use that opportunity to the full, and give our students the experience of their lifetime, often the one they will never experience in real life.

ARTICLES

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS ON THE WEB – USING THE INTERNET TO FACILITATE SCHOOL COLLABORATION

by Jarek Krajka

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Introduction

For a number of years, school partnerships have been regarded an essential element of language teaching and learning. It is beyond doubt that it is highly beneficial for students to cooperate with their peers from abroad.. When learning the language, and especially when learning English as a Foreign Language, students are all the time in a sort of an artificial learning environment, where the teacher is usually also a non-native speaker of English, and where students do not have to use the target language to communicate their ideas, since they can do the same in their mother tongue. The learning environment is even more artificial when the class is homogenous in terms of nationality, culture and race, which is the case in Polish schools, where you can rarely find a student born or brought up in some other country or culture. Therefore, students, when learning in a class like that, do not see immediate purpose of their using the target language, and exist all the time in the same surrounding.

To a classroom like that, a school partnership can bring a lot of benefit. First of all, when communicating with their pals from other countries, students have to use the target language to convey their ideas, emotions or suggestions as they cannot cope in any other way, so they are forced to using the language learnt all the time. Also, their communication has a real purpose and is more natural, because they treat English as the common channel of communication, which is not the case in teacher-students or student-student relations in the classroom. Finally, when dealing with students belonging to other cultures, having different beliefs, customs or habits, students learn to appreciate different cultures, opinions, attitudes, they increase their cultural awareness, broaden horizons, develop a deeper and more mature view on different matters.

These are all well-known benefits of student partnerships, which do not need any justification. However, there are times when real school partnerships are not possible, simply because of the distance between the partner schools and the cost of journey from one place to the other. Also, it sometimes happen that when classes do have students exchanges with schools in some other country and students meet each other for the first time when arriving in the place, they do not know anything about themselves, the pairs are not grouped according to age, interests or level of English, but at random. In such cases, it seems that an online cooperation, that is class partnership done on the Web, using e-mail, chat, and WWW in different collaborative projects, should always precede a real exchange, and an online collaboration like that may bring much benefit to teaching a number of school subjects, not only English.

The present paper will try to explore the issue of Web partnerships as a prelude to real students exchange, and will try to address the problems of demands on the teacher, students and equipment, finding a suitable partner class, preparing and running an exchange. Also, it will be explained how a student partnership on the Web should develop from simple e-mailing to a more complex project, how its focus should evolve from teaching English to teaching other subjects and creating collaborative projects on the Net, and how different communication channels (e-mail, chat, mailing list, WWW) can be used in the exchange., and finally the issue of support for a school partnership will be addressed. The paper is followed by the appendix, where some information about projects facilitating different Web-based exchanges can be found.

Pen Pal Exchange vs. Key Pal Exchange

First, we need to compare the traditional form of collaboration (a pen pal exchange) with the one using a different medium, a key pal exchange. Pen pal exchange involved writing traditional letters between students from partner classes, while key pal is the same but using e-mail as the medium of communication.

A traditional pen pal exchange, because of usually long time passing between writing a letter and receiving it, and consequently between writing a letter and getting the response to the letter written could have been quite ineffective and demotivating for students. Obviously, waiting for weeks or months to get the response must have had rather a bad effect on students. Because of that, it was hardly possible for teachers to use a pen pal exchange to achieve some teaching goals, and it was treated rather as an additional component of the course, some opportunity to practise the language learned outside the classroom in real life. Also, before the Internet offered teachers all over the world the chance to communicate and share opinions easily and quickly, pen pal exchanges could have been random, as it was more difficult to find appropriate partners. What is more, a pen pal exchange, being ordinary letter writing, involved some cost of posting the letter, which could have been quite high when talking about two places remote from each other. Thus, it might have been impossible for the teacher to organise a letter exchange for the whole class, simply because some students would not be able to afford it.

Of course, traditional letter writing did have some advantages. First of all, students learned how to write letters in the appropriate manner, with the proper layout, style, they worked on their handwriting, paid ample attention to capitalisation and spelling. Nowadays, in the era of e-mail writing, these matters are no longer that important, capitalisation is no longer essential, spelling is checked by the programme, and the letter does not look like a traditional letter, so less attention (if any) needs to be paid to its layout. Also, traditional letter writing was

definitely more secure, as it was only the recipient which could get the letter in a closed envelope, while in a key pal exchange, an e-mail message, after being received, may be read by other people if it is not erased. Also, it is possible to send messages from other people's accounts using that programme, which makes the e-mail communication unsafe and unreliable. Finally, e-mail messages, and especially their attachments, are dangerous as the best ways for viruses of different kinds to be spread.

When considering the merits of a key pal exchange, and its advantages over traditional letter writing, it needs to be noticed that it is much faster, as the letter arrives in a few minutes, which makes it more motivating and beneficial for students, as they do not have to wait months for a response. Also, e-mailing is relatively cheap, if not free at all (if it is the school which pays the cost of the Internet connection), and when compared with the postage costs, e-mail messages are definitely much cheaper and in this way more affordable for all students. Belisle (1996), when talking about the benefits of using e-mail in the classroom, says that when e-mailing students become familiar with the medium which is going to be essential in the near future; the interaction between the teacher and students or the teacher of one class and the teacher of the other is more convenient, and due to that it is possible to closely coordinate the Web project. Also, as Belisle claims, it is possible for the teacher to monitor the process of creating a message, to compare consecutive letters and evaluate students' progress, as well as to compare the letter and the response to it to see what is the understanding between the writer and the receiver. According to Warshauer (1995), e-mail provides students with an excellent opportunity for real communication, makes it possible for students to learn independently, at their own pace, to communicate their individual ideas, emotions and opinions. Finally, as Warshauer's argument goes, e-mail enables students to have many chances for collaboration, communication and information, leading them to a brand new world of experience.

Web-Based Collaboration:

Demands On The Teacher, Students, Organisation

When talking about a student exchange done with the help of the Internet, a word is needed about the necessary skills and qualities possessed by teacher and students, as well as the organisational provisions necessary to make such an online collaboration successful. The first element of the online classroom is the teacher. As for him, he should be not only capable of teaching English, but should also have certain knowledge of the Net and computers, so that he could teach it if necessary. Of course, the initial assumption is that the lesson of English is not the time to teach students how to set up an e-mail account, write, send, or reply to letters, browse the Web for some specific information, because these skills should be acquired during Information Technology classes. However, it may happen that some students are not skilled enough or have some problems, so the teacher should be able to help them. It seems that if the teacher himself has an e-mail account and exchanges e-mail messages on a regular basis, he does not need any special knowledge. What is more important about the teacher is that he should be convinced of the benefits of a Web-based exchange, should have some ideas on how to organise, run, manage it, what goals he wants to achieve in terms of teaching and learning. Nagel (1999) claims that when using e-mail in teaching, the teacher should gradually become a "learning facilitator," a less prominent figure, passing more independence and responsibility in the hands of students, but if it happens so, the teacher should make sure that the exchange is in line with his teaching goals, with the content of the course, that it does not evolve the way students want. It is also essential that the teacher should consider the online

partnership in terms of the syllabus of a given class, and plan the assignments for students in such a way that they have the chance to put into practice the structures, vocabulary or forms of writing learned recently. In the question that was asked by Nagel (1999), should e-mail serve as add-on to the course (using e-mailing as additional element of English instruction) or as a core (basic component of the course, just as coursebook is in most cases), it seems to me that e-mail exchange should be an additional chance for students to practise their English in authentic writing interaction, reinforcing and practising already learned structures, rather than should be treated as the basis for the course, instead of a coursebook.

The second element of the classroom are the students, and when thinking about a Web-based exchange, it is important that they should have the computer skills necessary to send and receive e-mail messages, browse the Web, create websites, etc. Also, they must have sufficient typing skills, so that writing a letter does not take too much time and does not cause the frustration of a student. They should be eager to take part in a Web-based partnership, but this is usually no problem, as the Internet and computers are usually extremely powerful magnets, motivating students to learning. Also, they should be willing to collaborate with students from other countries, be open to new ideas and attitudes, innovative and creative enough to put their share to the collaborative project. Of course, they must be fluent in English to a degree allowing them to express themselves and ask for response. Finally, students must be aware of the importance of netiquette, that is the appropriate way of writing, referring to previous messages, asking for information, agreeing, disagreeing, all within the socially accepted norms. As Nagel (1999) notes, some students could be discouraged from participating in an exchange when encountering unsympathetic or unruly verbal behaviour, and perhaps a good idea would be to practise writing and responding to letters among the students in class before starting writing to students from a partner class, in order to learn appropriate conventions and modes of writing.

Finally, some attention must be devoted to the organisational aspects of a Web-based partnership. Obviously, students need to have their individual e-mail accounts, so that they could write e-mail messages from school or any other place, at any time they wish. If they do not have their e-mail accounts, the teacher of English could devote some time to setting them up on some website, explaining the basic rules of e-mailing such as replying, forwarding messages, creating a signature, changing the stationery, attaching files, etc. Students must have relatively free access to computers, either in a library reading room, or some self-access provision for a computer lab, so that they could freely e-mail their key pals. As Web-based partnerships, in my understanding of the term, comprise not only e-mailing but also collaborative webpublishing, students should be able to create their own website, so the school should provide the space on the school server and some webpublishing programme (the simplest being Microsoft Frontpage Express, supplied free of charge with MS Internet Explorer).

Finding a Suitable Partner Class

As it was said before, one of the problems with traditional pen pal writing exchanges was that they were sometimes organised at random, and pen pals were not chosen according to their level of English, age or interests. Because of a widespread interest in e-mail partnerships, it is possible now to find a partner class which will match one's class in all these respects. In this section, I will address the issue of finding a key pal in two dimensions: finding an individual partner and finding a partner class.

If we want to give our students the chance to use their language in real written interaction, and if they are curious to find out about foreign students' customs, lifestyles or opinions, we could guide our students to finding individual key pals. There are plenty of educational sites on the Web, where it is possible for students to post a "looking for a key pal" advertisement and wait for response. One example would be Dave Sperling's ESL Cafe, www.eslcafe.com, one of the best known ESL/EFL sites for teachers and learners of English. It is more than likely that our students get the response and will be able to start an e-mail exchange on their own, since, as the example quoted by Gajek (2000) shows, when her student placed an announcement on this site, she got at least 10 responses even the other day.

However, the question which needs to be answered is the following: shall we let our students manage their key pal connection, namely write what they want, how often they want, or perhaps not write at all, or perhaps should the teacher be responsible for running and managing the exchange, using it to enhance learning in the context of the syllabus? As was already signalled earlier, it is my feeling that the latter approach is more profitable in terms of learning benefit, as students get the chance to implement the structures and words learnt in practice, to exchange their opinions, and the material learnt is no longer abstract, but becomes really bread-and-butter. Therefore, it seems necessary for a teacher to find a partner class for his class as a whole, that is, first of all, a partner teacher with similar teaching goals and attitude to using e-mail in the classroom, teaching students of a similar age, level, interests. Before starting an exchange, the teacher could conduct some analysis of students' needs and expectations, so that they can feel that what they are doing is their exchange and not the teacher's. It is essential that the classes are suited to each other in these respects, since otherwise the communication will not be natural and motivating to students. Whenever there are two teachers coordinating the exchange on both sides, they should make sure that there is a response to every letter sent, so that the problem of non-response having a harmful effect on motivation (see Nagel 1999) does not exist.

In order to find a perfect match for his class, the teacher could use one of the various channels on the Web to post a call for collaboration, with specific demands and expectations, and find partners willing to start a student exchange:

- one of the specialist discussion lists (e.g., TESLCA-L or NETEACH-L)
- national or local discussion lists (the Central European TEFL list CETEFL-L or Greek TEFL-GR list)
- the European Schoolnet newsletter (www.eun.org website)
- the professionals from national IATEFL Computer Special Interest Groups (e.g., IATEFL Poland Computer SIG, <http://www.iatefl.org.pl/sig/call/call1.html>)
- the database of schools participating in the European Commission 3m. Socrates Comenius programme (www.3mnet.org, see the appendix for details on the programme)
- join the Computer Pals Across the World (CPAW) programme, at <http://reach.ucf.edu/~cpaw> (see the appendix for information about it)
- post a teacher call for collaboration on Dave's ESL Cafe (www.eslcafe.com)
- join one of the mailing lists of the Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections (<http://www.iecc.org/>), (see the appendix for more specific information on different IECC mailing lists)

Obviously, these are just some of the possibilities on how to find a suitable partner class, and what is essential is that it is the teacher who finds a matching partner class for the whole class,

which makes it possible to give whole-class assignments and work whole class on similar tasks and projects. An individual student exchange, that is having students write what they want and how often they want, though certainly beneficial in terms of developing communicative abilities and giving students the responsibility for their learning and freedom of expression, may fail or be not used to its full because some students may be unwilling to share their ideas and opinions. An institutionalised e-mail exchange, that is communicating whole class with another class, with two teachers responsible for running the partnership, giving students the purpose to write by assigning certain tasks, is more likely to be successful and beneficial for students.

Running the Exchange

A Web-based partnership between two classes, in order to be beneficial to students, needs to be prepared, coordinated and run appropriately by the teachers of both classes. A close collaboration and mutual understanding is crucial here, so that the exchange will be successful and students will be motivated to using this new medium of communication.

When preparing students for an e-mail exchange, the teacher must first make sure that the organisational conditions are met: students have their e-mail accounts, either on school mail server or Web-based e-mail on some websites such as Hotmail or Yahoo, that they are able to access the computer lab in order to write and receive mail, that they have ample computer skills and typing skills.

The next step to be made is teaching students the rules of e-mail discourse, namely how to reply to letters, how to convey emotions with the help of special signs called smile ys, what are the things to be avoided (using capital letters – “shouting” or sending offensive messages – “spamming”). Also, students could be taught some time-saving features of the e-mail software: how to create and add a signature, how to create filters to filter incoming messages and put them to new folders, how to set up the options of the e-mail software to suit students’ preferences and make their work easier (for details on using filters and managing large volumes of mail, see Nagel 1999). After that, the teacher should devote some attention to preparing his students for the exchange by working on developing their tolerance, cultural awareness, explaining the rules of the partnership, the goals and expectations, so that the exchange is not disrupted by offensive or irresponsible behaviour by any of the students. Of course, a similar preparation should be done by the teacher of the partner class.

As for the teachers, they should try to establish some schedule of work, by looking at their syllabuses, topics, genres of writing, grammatical structures, so that the partnership would follow some established plan. For example, if I teach a class with *New Headway Intermediate*, where at the end of each unit there is one writing genre to be practised, my expectation towards the e-mail exchange is that in this week my students will write a letter to a friend, while at the end of the next unit, six weeks later, they will practise describing a person in a letter to their key pals. Thus, a close look at the writing genres to be introduced in the book, the topics, the texts, should result in some approximate syllabus of the exchange, which then needs to be negotiated with the teacher of the other class. Of course, it may sometimes be difficult to agree on a syllabus like that, and perhaps this would kill the spontaneity of the exchange. It is not my intention to claim that students’ exchange should be planned from the beginning to the end, and students should be encouraged to write to their pals when they want to. I would like to stress only that the e-mail partnership should serve also some overall teaching goals, should be compatible with the syllabus by reinforcing structures and

vocabulary, and that students should write also to accomplish some tasks or assignments given by the teacher.

The final issue to be considered is the attitude of the teacher to error correction, feedback, and content of the letters. Traditionally, students write some written works and submit them to the teacher, who returns them with errors corrected. In this way, however, a letter to a friend is never a letter to a friend, but rather to a student's worst enemy, the teacher. When writing their works, students feel that it is only to practise language, or to evaluate them, but they do not have the real purpose to write. When participating in an e-mail exchange, students do have the feeling of authenticity, they know that they are involved in a real act of human communication. Letters sent to the key pals are, as all letters, messages from one individual to the other, and it seems that the teacher as a kind of "middleman" would interfere with students' freedom of expression and might have a deteriorating effect on students' motivation to write. Also, it appears that a letter corrected by a teacher, where corrections may involve not only outright grammar or spelling mistakes, but also some rephrasing, is not really a letter written by a student, and in this way the exchange becomes artificial. On the other hand, some way of correcting errors in order to provide feedback and eliminate mistakes is needed in an e-mail exchange as well. Also, a teacher should think about the problem of censorship or control of the content of students' writing, so that the letters do not contain any offensive or abusive material, supplied maliciously by students, or that students, especially when communicating with pals from other cultures, do not unconsciously break any rules or commit blunders.

As for error correction, the best solution that comes to my mind is to make students send the letter to their key pal, with the copy to the teacher, so that the letter which is sent is actually the student's work, but the teacher has also the opportunity to highlight mistakes and provide feedback on the quality of writing. As for the problem of censorship and control, it seems that the teacher should not interfere with the content of the letters before they are sent, but should react, if necessary, in an appropriate manner after receiving the copy of the letter.

Developing the Web-Based Partnership

At the beginning of the present paper, it was emphasised strongly that the Web-based collaboration is not only an e-mail exchange. In this section, I would like to develop this idea, and show how the Web partnership could grow into deeper and more specialised forms.

The first stage of the class exchange, in my opinion, is an e-mail exchange. Under the guidance and with the help of the teacher of English, students write letters to their key pals, get responses, reply to them, etc. The teachers of both classes are in close cooperation, they work on some approximated syllabus, so that they can use this channel of communication to reinforce structures or practise new writing genres. Apart from school assignments, students are encouraged to communicate freely, just as they wish. At this stage, the e-mail connection is used primarily for learning English, developing fluency in writing, working on reading comprehension, practising new genres and styles of writing, learning how to interact in writing with a real person. Students should get specific tasks from time to time (e.g., once a fortnight), and in order to accomplish these tasks they need to write a letter asking for information from their key pal. In this way, the e-mail exchange adds an additional dimension to traditional learning by giving students a real purpose to write.

After some time, as the exchange is well established and students know their key pals so well that they do not feel very curious to find out any more information about them, the established partnership could move to the second stage, namely stop serving only learning English, but could be used with benefit to other subjects as well. In this second stage, students could be encouraged to do collaborative projects in other school subjects (history, geography, ecology, etc.), such as for instance measuring and analysing noise level or pollution in their respective towns. In this way, the well-established channel of communication can serve teachers of other subjects as well, and students would get a deeper view on the matters learnt if they did some collaborative projects with their key pals. As for learning English, there is still enormous benefit, since all the time English is the language of communication, and students constantly practise the language. What is even better, when working on collaborative Web projects they move to more specialized registers and areas of language, learning vocabulary from some other fields such as biology or geography. The role of the English teacher is less prominent here, and he is rather the facilitator of the exchange, providing language help, but the partnership should be taken over by teachers of other subjects. Of course, the teacher of English could still work as the coordinator, convincing teachers of other subjects of the great value of Web-based collaborative learning, and urging them to assign students projects demanding collaboration with their key pals.

In this second stage, that is collaborative projects in other subjects, students should be encouraged to using the Internet as the source of materials and searching for relevant information, facts, pictures, to make their projects more interesting and evidence-based. Working in the Internet still brings enormous benefits in terms of learning English, simply because most of the Internet content is in English, and anything students do is in fact unconscious learning of the language. The projects, being comparative in nature because of being created by two sides, make students' learning more interesting, and place their knowledge in other subjects in the broader context of the world, in this way increasing cultural awareness, developing tolerance and appreciation for other cultures.

The next stage of the partnership might be having the two classes working together on a collaborative website. Students of both classes could be asked to write texts on such aspects of life as lifestyles, their rooms, unusual houses, entertaining guests, their city, etc. Then, a common website could be created, publishing the texts of both classes together, under one topic (e.g. our rooms). Such a collaborative website could be easily created, with one side responsible for that and texts sent to the webmaster (the webmaster might be a student, more proficient in computer skills and needing additional challenge). After creating a website like that, new works should be added there as they are created, and in this way, when knowing that their works will be published and seeing them actually published, students would get additional motivation to writing. For the school administration, a collaborative website will be the visible evidence of a deep and well-developed partnership on both sides. Also, a website like that will be a good resource of materials concerning the two cultures, and could stimulate some discussions comparing them. An intercultural, multinational website would be a true culmination of the Web-based partnership, and would truly serve the purpose of removing barriers between nations, dismissing national stereotypes that students might have of their key pal nations, building understanding and friendship between nations.

An example of a website putting these values into practice could be British Council Rome's Students' Metro Pages (www.britishcouncil.it/english/english/rome/students), the site done by and for Italian students of English at BC Rome, but the coordinator, Michael Ivy, encourages also students from other countries to contribute their works on the topics presented on the site.

In this way, the site made in Rome by Italian students starts being a multicultural, multilingual forum for exchanging opinions and describing customs, easily accessible from any place on the earth. The Internet is a medium which does not know any borders, limits of time or space, and which connects people from all parts of the world. Thus, creating collaborative websites by partner classes seems to be the best way to make the most of this medium for the benefit of students.

Another dimension of the online collaboration is using some other forms of Web communication such as mailing lists or chat. After having been e-mailing for some time, teachers might organise a chat session from time to time, for students to exchange their opinions and talk with their key pals in real time, in this way developing not only writing but also speaking (it is assumed here that chatting is not really writing, but rather speaking in a written form). Of course, students need to know how to operate a chat software, how to talk to the whole group or talk only with one person of their choice, so a good idea would be to organise chat sessions in the classroom before doing one with the partner class. However, the important factor to be remembered is that for the chat session to be successful students need to have sufficient typing skills, so that it does not take ages to exchange views, and therefore it is advised to use chat after having been e-mailing for some time. As for mailing lists, they allow sending messages to the whole group (here two classes), and this technical opportunity could also be used by the teachers coordinating the exchange. Here, it needs to be remembered that mailing lists can generate large volumes of mail, so students should know how to manage them by using filtering, saving messages, deleting them, replying to the individual author or the whole group.

Finally, as the last stage of the partnership, a real student exchange could be organised, with a trip of one class to the other and vice versa. Of course, this stage is not necessary, and if partner classes live in too remote places or cannot afford the journey, the lack of a real exchange is no problem, since the Web-based collaboration they have already done has already brought some benefit both in terms of learning English, learning other subjects and developing students' character and personalities. If a real exchange does take place, it is thoroughly prepared by the Web-based collaboration, students know their key pals very well, and in this way the real meeting that occurs is the one of old friends, and not of strangers seeing each other for the first time.

Supporting the Exchange

Finally, a few words need to be said about the way the exchange should be supported, so that it succeeds in developing greater understanding and friendship between partner students. Obviously, the teacher of English has the greatest role to play, since he is responsible for finding a partner class, teaching students the rules of writing discourse, starting and running the exchange in its first phase. Surely, the English teacher needs help from the Information Technology teacher, in such matters as setting up individual e-mail accounts for students, helping with machines, making the computer lab available for self-access. Also, teachers of other subjects need to support the teacher running the exchange, especially in its second phase, namely collaborative projects focusing on other school subjects than English, by giving students assignments demanding cooperation with their key pals, by making reference to the culture, history or geography of the partner nation, by encouraging students to the idea of searching for information and selecting relevant facts rather than relying on a ready-made coursebook. The next factor is the headmaster, and he should also provide ample support to the English teacher running the exchange. For the school, an exchange like that is an

additional asset, acting to its advantage, and knowing that, the headmaster should make all necessary provisions for it to be successful. Finally, the exchange will surely need financial support, and various governmental programmes (such as European Commission 3m. Socrates Comenius programme, www.3mnet.org) can aid the teacher and the school in organising and running a Web-based collaboration.

Conclusion

It is widely known that a student exchange, either in the form of writing letters or visiting each other, has great advantages for students, by helping them to acquire communicative skills, teaching them tolerance and appreciation for other cultures, giving them a real purpose for writing, reading, listening and speaking, placing their learning in a real-life situation. However, a real exchange is sometimes difficult to organise and execute because of substantial costs involved. The Internet, and specifically e-mail, websites and chat, gives teachers tools for organising partnerships between classes very easily and with little cost involved. It seems obvious that after a Web-based collaboration a real exchange will be much more profitable and successful than without it.

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APPENDIX

PROJECTS FOR SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

3M PROJECTS FOR EUROPEAN SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIPS

www.3mnet.org

Multilingual, Multicultural, Multimedia Projects for European School Partnerships (3m. project) is a part of European Commission Socrates Comenius programme. The project, funded by the European Commission Socrates, COMENIUS (In-Service Training), aims to promote European school partnerships using technology and multimedia for collaborative projects familiarising children with other languages and developing their cultural awareness and appreciation of other nations.

3m Comenius project focuses on supporting school based partnerships which enable teachers to use multimedia with children for collaborative projects which enhance children's technological, linguistic, creative, social skills and intercultural understanding.

Project activities are aided by a network of national and regional coordination, and coordinators develop their own language versions of the materials, design and run courses suited to their own policies, and provide technical support and advice for schools setting up partnership projects in their regions.

Examples of projects already undertaken include:

1. multilingual, multimedia collaborative stories on CD. They were created by children in classes aged between 4 and 12 and reflect the enormous potential of this media. The stories created ranged from very simple productions to extremely complex interactive stories, at the same time challenging to navigate.
2. Netd@ys projects, comprising collaboration during Netd@ys between infant schools in different countries of Europe.

The Website of the programme, www.3mnet.org, includes the following features:

- a multilingual database of European teachers interested in setting up collaborative multimedia projects with partner schools (Joining the Network)
- training courses with online linguistic and technical support to help teachers develop multilingual, multimedia authoring skills (Training and Support)
- examples of projects already accomplished (Examples)
- informal contact and discussion online with experienced teachers (Forum)
- information on sources of funding to make preparatory visits, where to apply for European Commission funding for collaborative educational projects, as well as news on European multimedia initiatives with implications for schools (News and Funding)
- links to other useful websites (Links)

Teachers setting up collaborative projects in 3m. project are eligible for financial support through the Socrates Comenius programme. The classes may have one partner at first focusing on one target language, and when established and made firm, they may add additional partners. When looking for partner classes in 3m. programme, teachers of children aged 4-18 can give their details to search for suitable partner classes of similar age, background, interests, expectations. As for older students, the projects may be devoted to some specific curriculum topic and they may require the shared use of English. Communication and collaboration in multimedia projects are achieved largely through the medium of English, but not entirely, taking other languages into account as well, in order to develop students' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe.

Teachers interested in developing skills in using multimedia and software and set up school based partnerships, are asked to browse through the materials collected on www.3mnet.org website and register their interests on the database of schools. These applications are checked to make sure that only real schools are accepted. National coordinators of the 3m. programme should provide support to teachers in schools who have registered. Also, the European schoolnet website, www.eun.org, is a perfect source of information and ideas on school partnerships. The European Schoolnet newsletter, which can be subscribed free of charge on the site, is the posting board for collaboration of schools from all over Europe and includes

EUN news, calls for cooperation, announcements of new projects, multilingual and multicultural resources.

INTERCULTURAL E-MAIL CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

<http://www.iecc.org>

IECC (Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections) is a free service to help teachers link with partners in other countries and cultures for e-mail classroom pen-pal and project exchanges. Since its creation in 1992, IECC has distributed over 28,000 requests for e-mail partnerships. At last count, more than 7650 teachers in 82 countries were participating in one or more of the IECC lists.

IECC has various specific mailing lists, suited for exchanges between particular groups: IECC-HE (for higher education), intended for teachers seeking partner classrooms for international and cross-cultural e-mail exchanges with institutions of higher education; IECC (for K-12), intended for teachers seeking partner classrooms for international and cross-cultural e-mail exchanges, and not for discussion or for people seeking individual penpals; IECC-INTERGEN, intended for teachers and "50+ Volunteers" seeking partners for intergenerational e-mail exchanges; IECC-PROJECTS, where teachers may announce or request help with specific classroom projects that involve e-mail, internationally or cross-culturally; IECC-SURVEYS, a forum for students (and teachers) to post requests for assistance on projects, surveys, and questionnaires; and IECC-DISCUSSION, intended for general discussion about the applications and implications of intercultural e-mail classroom connections.

COMPUTER PALS ACROSS THE WORLD (CPAW)

<http://reach.ucf.edu/~cpaw/>

Computer Pals Across the World (CPAW) is a non-profit global educational electronic network, which was co-founded in 1983 by Dr. Malcolm Beazley AM, an Australian educator, and James Erwin, a computer consultant from the USA. It provides opportunities for people in educational and community institutions to exchange their ideas, experiences, opinions and knowledge in different collaborative learning environments to promote and develop global understanding. It is operated and managed in over twenty countries by dedicated educators and citizens donating their voluntary services and expertise.

CPAW aims to:

- give students a real context in which they can improve their written communication skills;
- provide an opportunity for cultural exchange through reading and writing;
- provide a real-life opportunity for people to develop computer skills and typing skills;
- make people familiar with the use of international telecommunications;
- free people from isolation caused by age, physical and emotional handicap and remove geographical barriers;
- help in the learning of foreign languages;

- provide a medium for collaborative study and research;
- provide a forum for the discussion of and dissemination of information on the effective uses of telecommunications in education.

CPAW has traditionally linked schools one-to-one, matching interests and age groups where possible across national boundaries. Today, among the possible configurations there are the following options: institution to institution; school/class to project; lighthouse projects; class to class; mini-networks on specific topics; individual links within specific institutions or groups such as Hospitals and Senior Citizens.

CPAW is a K-12 organization and beyond to post secondary institutions and community organizations (e.g. Senior Citizens).

CPAW cost structures will vary from country to country depending upon the electronic mail system being used. While there is now increasing use of Internet by CPAW members, other services such as CompuServe, America On-line, BT/Tymenet, etc. are being used. For further information contact cpaw@reach.ucf.edu

As for the advantages of the programme, CPAW is a total community organization which involves schools, senior citizens, universities and hospitals around the world; CPAW has been existing for over ten years and has a wide experience in global networking. It was established by educators for educational purposes and provides an annual Online Calendar of projects from which members can choose. Also, CPAW has a regular Online Newsletter which assists communication between members and keeps them informed as well as a network of national directors and specialist co-ordinators which acts as a support to members,. Finally, CPAW holds an annual international conference, where experiences and ideas collaborative learning can be exchanged.

INTERNET LESSON PLANS

FAMOUS PEOPLE ON THE NET

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PRE- STAGE

REQUIREMENTS:

- simple chat software, for example *Pony Chat* or *Microsoft Net Meeting* (shipped with Windows 9x);
- for worldwide contacts we recommend ICQ : <http://web.icq.com/index> in which the users get connected by a special server which relays their virtual utterances in real time;
- naturally, the computer lab specialist should know how to arrange the lesson, but it is advisable to check how everything works in advance in order to predict any unforeseen situations;

ASSUMPTION:

- basic computer literacy, i.e. the students know how to run applications, and are familiar with the tree structure of files on the hard disk;

MAIN TASK: Use of English language search engines to collect information

1. Computers off. Tell students how to use chat software properly, and specifically how to use smileys (ways of expressing emotions in email writing), and what the netiquette is and how to follow it (the information about these might be downloaded beforehand from any decent web portal; preferably in Polish)

WARMER (max. 10 min)

2. Computers on. Then, as a warm-up they may do a simple game, with the teacher as the initiator, start a net conversation, adding a line from each. Remember that the class should be in the intranet, that is in the local network of computers; it's good to know numbers of particular computers in the room. It is important to remember that Internet access is not necessary for that stage.

Example activity:

Teacher is TOMATO and others have their own nicknames.

TOMATO How are you today folks? You know, I met a famous person yesterday.

GROUP 1 Was it Mr Wałęsa?

TOMATO Please, ask me questions. Remember: GROUP AFTER GROUP!!!

GROUP 1 ... Is it ... ?

GROUP 2 ... Is this ...?

GROUP 3 ...

GROUP 4 ...

GROUP 5 ...

TOMATO Well, he is very rich, doesn't live in Europe, deals with computers.

GROUP 3 Is it Bill Gates?

TOMATO Yes!

MAIN TASK

D) SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FAMOUS PEOPLE (25 min)

The teacher has to tell students how to use the Net sensibly, that is give them some **search criteria**, e.g.

Teacher:

'Use www.go.com

or www.infoseek.com

and type in the the first and last name of the person you're looking for'

Remark:

If you are searching for English-language websites use an English search engine, and remember that for instance the name "Wałęsa" might be non-existent for worldwide engines, so do the search again using all-ASCII "Walesa."

Teacher:

'You need to write down (on a piece of paper):

Name,

Birthday,
country,
town/city,
interests,
family,
famous for WHAT?

Why did you choose this particular person?’

‘You’re going to make a puzzle for all students here. They should guess who your person is.

I GIVE YOU 20 MINUTES TO DO THAT’

Students proceed to do the task, with the teacher monitoring their progress and helping if necessary.

II) PRESENTING THE INFO ABOUT FAMOUS PEOPLE (20 min)

Tell them to stop, give time to organise their notes, and say:

‘Now we are going to GUESS your mysterious persons. Please, DO THAT IN TURNS, **GROUP 1 STARTS.**’

Give them time to run the applications (the chat software), log in etc.

Teacher: ‘GROUP 1 *THE CHAT IS YOURS* / GO AHEAD’

Now the presentation follows, others wait until all pieces of information have been displayed on the screen.

Then the groups ask questions and have fun. The teacher should try not to interfere too much but make sure there are no breaks and all groups are equally involved in the task. The teacher’s responsibility is also to keep the pace brisk.

POST- STAGE

SIMPLE PROJECT

Now students are going to present their data in the form of an electronic poster, presented directly on the computer screen.

Time allowing, students could be told to go back to the websites they have already visited in order to collect more substantial data about their chosen persons. Teach them how to copy

portions of text directly from web pages and how to copy graphics (photos, maps, etc.), since most pages permit such copying. If some students do not know how to use a wordprocessing software, such as MS Word, the teacher may need to appoint the abler students leaders of larger groups. This stage of your class will be the most creative as they can select any pieces of information. Obviously, the teacher will have to be extremely watchful here to filter any unwanted or improper data. The students produce a document with graphics, or even some background music. After they are done, we suggest the teacher copy the resultant files onto the hard disk (making use of the Local Area Network) and tell them their works are going to be checked (or/and censored).

Here the teacher might introduce an element of suspense and say that they will know the results in next class. Another option would be to tell them that the best e-poster will be put on the school website. This should be extremely motivating for students, as it would make their productions published worldwide.

A DESCRIPTION OF A CAR

by Dariusz Łukasik

Level: Elementary (Polish Gimnazjum – class II, age 14)

Time: 2 x 45 minutes

Aims: To identify different ways of getting necessary information about the various features of cars.

- To read the descriptions of various types of cars and vehicles
- To search the Web for various descriptions of cars
- To present and practise talking about frequency
- To learn writing a description of a car
- To gain greater knowledge about the world
- To reinforce vocabulary connected with cars and vehicles

Course of the lesson:

I. Pre-stage:

1. To introduce the topic, the teacher should ask students to say about their favourite kinds of cars and vehicles (for example: cars, lorries, off-road vehicles, sports cars, buses etc.), favourite colours of cars and favourite makes of them. The teacher should show students some examples of models of cars or some colourful pictures of them.
2. The teacher should ask students: “How could you describe these models/pictures of cars?” “What kind of information do you need?” “What kind of sources can you use to search for needed information?”. Then students answer above-mentioned questions.
3. The teacher gives worksheets to every pair of students. They should fill in these materials working in pairs during the lesson. The sample of these materials can be found in Appendix 1.

- The teacher asks students to give necessary kinds of information which they use to describe a car or vehicle. Students together with the teacher create the table like this enclosed (see Appendix 2).

II. While-stage:

- In this stage students should use the Internet to search for specific information about cars and vehicles. The teacher helps students to find websites which are the best for this activity. Students search websites which have quite simple but comprehensive information. After finding useful sites students fill in the table on their sheets (see Appendix 2).
- After students have completed the table, they should summarise their work to the class, adding the element of sharing the information, and practising the words connected with cars.
- Then students should choose one table from all they created. On the basis of this table the teacher explains students how to do the description of a car or a vehicle. The teacher pays attention to the use of the Present Simple Tense and gives students other necessary instructions.
- Students (in pairs) create their own descriptions of a car or a vehicle which they chose earlier. The teacher (during students' work) corrects pupils' mistakes and helps them.
- The teacher asks students to have their descriptions in their notebooks, together with a drawing or a printout of a car described.

III. Post-stage:

The best descriptions should be put on the class website. During the next online lesson the whole class could read their own works and discuss the way of creating descriptions of something or somebody.

Examples of websites which could be used during this lesson:

<http://www.classicar.com>

<http://www.artcarmuseum.com>

Appendix 1: The template of the sheet for every pair of students.

- Look at the ways of getting information below. Write how often you use these ways. Use words from the box or ones of your own.

Ways of getting information	How often?
1. read magazines
2. read newspapers
3. listen to the radio programmes
4. watch TV programmes
5. use of Internet

6. use of school library sources
----------------------------------	-------

(almost) every day
A few times a week
(about) twice a month
(about) once a year
(almost) never

Appendix 2. Worksheet for students to complete when working on the Internet

Kind of vehicle:
Colour:
Kind of engine:
Maximum velocity:
Number of gears:
Number of seats:
Consumption of fuel:
Kind of fuel:
Other information:

WEBSITE REVIEWS

DUMB LAWS

www.dumblaws.com

by Jarek Krajka

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www.dumblaws.com is an authentic site with laws from different countries, but the laws collected are for some reason “dumb” – they are either extremely out-of-date, or ridiculously distant from the reality. The authors of the site strongly emphasise the fact that all the laws are really acting in respective countries, none is made up or no longer in use, which is sometimes hard to believe, judging by the stupidity of some of them.

The home page of the site has the option of browsing through specific countries (“Different Countries”) or the states of the USA (“States”). When choosing a state or a country, students get a list of laws from a particular country. These are quite short, written in a fairly simple language, so that intermediate or even pre-intermediate students should be able to comprehend them. Of course, dictionary help is necessary in most cases, since laws may contain either words which are not in everyday use or ones which are no longer used, as the majority of the laws are the ones that were introduced in the past and still exist. Anyway, this does not make it impossible to use the site even with lower-level students.

It should be said that the contents of the site is so ridiculous that students will surely have a good laugh when reading. It is important for the site to be appealing and interesting to students, as otherwise they will not be motivated to work on it. www.dumblaws.com is so funny that students forget that it is the lesson of English, that they are working on some material, but are eager to explore the laws of other countries. This is the most powerful justification of using the site for the lesson – if the material is so motivating and interesting, students will be extremely enthusiastic to work on it, and they will not notice that they practise grammar or learn new vocabulary.

The site offers all main advantages of online instruction over coursebook instruction:

- authenticity: students are convinced of the fact that the laws are authentic, though it is sometimes hard to believe
- novelty: the idea of stupid, but existent, laws from different countries is new to them, and because of that novelty they are likely to be more interested and motivated to work on it
- recency: since the site is updated frequently and new laws are added, students have the idea of recency of the material, especially when compared with an outdated coursebook

- variety: there are different countries and states on the site, and students should be assigned different states, which makes it possible to organise information-gap activities, having in mind that sharing and exchanging information foster the development of communicative abilities
- choice: students have the opportunity to choose states or countries they would like to work on, and they are not imposed a single text as in the case of a coursebook, and this decision-making enhances their learner autonomy
- interactivity: the site encourages people to send the stupid laws from their own countries, providing that they are true and still existent in the legal system (Poland is not in the site, so Polish students could contribute in this way to the making of the site, and seeing their works actually published on the Net would give students reward and encourage them to learning). Of course, the responsibility of the teacher is to supervise submitting stupid laws, in order to make sure that what students want to submit is really a law.

Obviously, it is not enough to have an interesting site, even the one such as www.dumblaws.com, to make a good English lesson. First of all, it needs to be said that for the lesson to be profitable, it needs to be compatible with the overall syllabus, practising already known vocabulary and reinforcing grammatical structures. Because of that, it seems that the site mentioned could be used after teaching modal verbs, in order to practise the forms and draw students' attention to the differences in meaning between them. The language of the site uses plenty of modal forms: *must*, *have to*, *be supposed to*, *be allowed to*, *be to*, both in positive and negative forms, so it is a great source for the presentation of modal verbs and the explanation of the forms. Also, students could be made aware of the differences in the strength of obligation of different modals, and as a practice activity they could be asked to browse through the site and grade the laws of their choice from the strictest to the least strict. Drawing on that knowledge, students could be asked to work in pairs and devise a list of ten dumb laws for a given environment (a school, a bus, an office, a supermarket, etc.), paying special attention to the shades of meaning carried by specific modal forms.

When talking about the usefulness of this site as the input for vocabulary work, it is difficult to determine some specific areas or topics, simply because the laws given come from all walks of life and as such it is impossible to provide some comprehensive vocabulary practice on a given topic. Also, as the laws are usually old-fashioned, the language used consists of outdated or obsolete words, and as such some laws may be hard to understand even with the dictionary. Of course, the site includes such a multitude of different laws that this is not a problem which could destroy the lesson.

To sum up, www.dumblaws.com is a website with enormous potential for language activities and Internet lessons, because it allows the teacher to exploit such aspects of online instruction as authenticity, novelty, recency, variety, choice and interactivity, constitutes a good source of materials for teaching modal verbs in an interesting and varied way, is appealing to students because of its contents. Therefore, as my experience shows, a lesson of English based on this site should be successful and beneficial in terms of teaching goals.

OHIO UNIVERSITY CALL LAB

www.ohiou.edu/esl

by Jarek Krajka

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OHIO University CALL Lab is a part of the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University, and it contains resource directories, study materials, things to read and topics to talk and write about (ENGLISH). Also, from the main page we can enter INFO-TOOLS (reference, library and Internet information tools), TEACHER section with lesson plans, professional development and other help for language teacher, OPIE (Ohio Program of Intensive English) sites, SEARCH the entire website for a specific topic or page, go to HELP site in order to find support on how to use this page or how to evaluate and cite information on the Web, and STUDENT LIFE, being the guide to life in the United States, and Athens, Ohio. The site is maintained by John McVicker, mcvicker@ohiou.edu.

This review will focus solely on the ENGLISH section, characterising types of resources available and possible applications of these in the classroom. When clicking on ENGLISH hyperlink, we move to the map of the site (www.ohiou.edu/esl/english), with the resources for English language and culture organised by skill area (grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary), by OPIE class (American English, Academic English, Combined Skills, Undergraduate Writing, Graduate Writing, Oral Communication, etc.), as well as other resources such as audio materials, video materials, topics for study, world news, web directories, textbook supplements, student projects and other resources.

I will not go into detail with all sections of the website, as this is not the purpose of my review. Instead, I would like to concentrate on a few features of the website, to show what kinds of materials can be found there. As for resources organised by skill, I clicked on “reading,” and what appears is the site with subsites and links to reading resources for English language learners, divided into “activities,” “reading skills,” “electronic texts” and “et cetera” sections.

In the “activities” section, students and teachers can find various types of materials, such as comprehension quizzes; reading and vocabulary activities; example texts and questions from TOEFL Reading Comprehension part; interactive reading activities focusing on comprehension, summarising, gap-filling, organised by level from basic to advanced; reading exercises based on folk tales; reading activities based on current news stories with audio, story outline and summary. The interesting feature is the link to the “Online Reading Club,” a group of readers from around the world, reading classics in English every 2 weeks and sending e-mail reviews to each other. The material in reading activities is authentic (CNN San Francisco, New York Times feature stories), literary and fictitious, which caters for a wide range of tastes and provides a variety indispensable to sustain students’ interest in reading.

In the “reading skills” section, students can find sites and links to essay reading, exam reading, comprehension strategies, textbook reading, which has the purpose of preparing students for exams and providing additional off-class support.

“Electronic Texts” section comprises resources on the site and links to other sites on the Web where e-texts could be found. The section is divided into “drama,” “news,” “poems,” “stories,” “songs,” “interactive fiction” and “other,” and each of them provides a number of

annotated links to sites with electronic texts of various kinds. Thanks to that enormous collection of links to electronic texts on the Web, teachers and students can easily find a work of their choice, without the need to perform a time-consuming search with the help of search engines.

Finally, “Et cetera” section of reading resources comprises links to some projects by students, writings of non-native English speakers, speed reading methods or methods for reading speed improvement.

The site offers plenty of materials and links to external sites to practise reading, and it is an extremely valuable starting point for teachers looking for any kind of reading activities or strategies for their students. It is widely known that one can find everything in the Internet, but the only problem is how to find it. Ohio University CALL Lab, with its astonishing collection of resources and links, removes this obstacle, making finding online materials much easier.

Apart from material divided according to skill, the site also offers searching its content by Ohio Program of Intensive English class. Of course, this is fully useful to Ohio University students, but other teachers, interested in e.g. teaching combined skills may go there as well, getting materials divided into the following sections: “Activities,” “Useful Resources,” “The Writing Process,” “The Essay Form,” “Reading Skills,” “Quotes/Paraphrases/Summaries,” “Library Skills and Resources,” “Research and Writing,” and finally “Modern Impressions: Writing in Our Times.” The materials collected in this section comprise, among others, interactive exercises based on stories in the news, interactive summary writing activities using technical texts, grammar, reading and writing resource pages, guidelines on evaluating student writing, tutorials on the process of planning and writing university-level essays, avoiding plagiarism, Web research practice, evaluating information, citing sources. Though the material is surely of interest to Ohio University students, it seems that every teacher could use the collection of materials and links when looking for some specific topic, in order to enrich his or her course with additional materials.

Out of the other resources, I would like to devote some attention to “Topics for study.” This is a site with topics, ideas, and questions that students might want to read about, listen to people talk and discuss or write about. The topics on the site are divided into “multi-topic resources” (e.g., Ethics on the Web), “society and politics” (Abortion, Climate Change, Censorship, Euthanasia, Gender Issues, Gun Control, Tobacco Use, and many more), “history and culture” (Adventures in Mythology, The Ancient World, The Holocaust, JFK Assassination, World Cultures, etc.), and “science and technology” (The Solar System, Weather Science, Volcanoes, and many others). When choosing a topic, Censorship for example, you move to a site where you can find definitions, resources on censorship, case studies, voices for and against it, Internet discussion and searches for censorship, questions. The “Topics for study” page is extremely useful as a collection of links on specific topic, together with the introduction, definition, arguments both for and against. When clicking on voices for censorship, we move to a list of websites of organisations being for censorship, and our students can get the arguments for it from the first hand. This approach makes the whole process authentic and appealing to students, as they can get some deeper and more mature arguments from real life. On the whole, I can see the topics page extremely valuable as the collection of materials stimulating discussion, as well as a useful tool for writing argumentative essays. What is more, it can be used also by teachers of other subjects, or

students can use this collection of materials and links when preparing projects assigned by teachers of other subjects such as history or geography.

In conclusion, it could be said that the Ohio University CALL Lab (www.ohiou.edu/esl) is a site with enormous amount of different materials, useful both to students and teachers, which could be used both in class and for self-study. The site is not confined only to Ohio University courses, but is easy to use also by other people from all over the world. Thanks to the site, searching the Web for specific information does not have to take that much time.

SOFTWARE REVIEWS

EURO PLUS+ REWARD

by Anna Maleszyk MALLEO@POCZTA.ONET.PL

and Tomasz Pałkowski PALKOV@LU.ONET.PL

GENERAL:

The Euro Plus + Reward has developed the Reward coursebook series as a multimedia package on a CD-ROM. It incorporates a wide variety of activity types based on the original Reward coursebook and Reward Video, but it can be also used on its own.

The Euro Plus + Reward gives students up to 150 hours of intensive, but also interesting, language learning at each level (from elementary to upper- intermediate).

Each level has 2 CDs and consists of up to 8 units per level, each with 5 lessons, one video lesson and one progress check. Each lesson has 12-15 separate screen pages and there is a full progress check at the end of each unit.

The program has very attractive graphic design. It also contains a wide range of activity types including, among others,

- gap filling;
- multiple choice;
- chart filling;
- identification;
- word ordering;
- matching;
- correcting and editing.

Students can check their answers after each exercise (with a special report which points out their mistakes and shows correct answers) or meaning and pronunciation of words (a special dictionary). What is more, students can work online. The course contains :

- *Forum*, where you can exchange opinions with other EPR users.
- *News service*,

- *Teacher service* with teacher's comments about your mistakes.

- *Online games*.

Generally speaking, Euro Plus + Reward is attractive and cooperative for students.

It can be interesting as a supplement to any coursebook they use. But it is better as self-study rather than an activity in class. If the student wished to repeat the whole stage of the course (e.g. pre-intermediate), they could go over the computer version. The activities on the computer are basically the same, however the user can get translations of the instructions and the grammar pages. Also recordings of exemplary sentences are provided which is very useful.

GOOD POINTS:

- excellent graphic design, elegant and not kitsch; the icons are well suited (Internet Explorer style); even the border line changes according to the level of the course – it is linked to the colour of the coursebooks;
- operated fully with the mouse;
- clear and intuitive; easy to navigate;
- good integration with the Internet; the idea of Teacher Service is fine;
- sounds are reduced to minimum – they do not distract the learner;
- top right corner is always active, providing instant access to the basic options;
- when connecting to the Internet no native language Windows boxes appear, therefore the user is entirely immersed in a different environment;
- the Course Exploration menu works fine: it's got excellent browsing capabilities; the range of search can be easily adjusted and the number of pages found is updated in real time;
- good multimedia extensions: the futuristic audio and video player;
- nearly every page is richly illustrated;

WEAK POINTS:

- some Video exercises appear difficult to follow, for example those where the still frames of a given video are put one on another;
- too few exercises on listening; these could be easily accommodated by reducing the volume occupied by numerous graphic illustrations to almost every page of the course;
- perhaps some repeated commands could be doubled by the keyboard;
- more space could have been devoted to additional drilling exercises, e.g. page 6 of lesson 5 or page 10 of lesson 5 show far more form than content;
- there's something misleading about the way Euro Plus informs the learner about the mistakes they've made; the programme doesn't distinguish, for example, between a word which is spelled incorrectly and a word which has not been supplied at all; if the user hasn't even begun a given exercise, he will learn that he has done 0 items correctly and 0 items incorrectly, which seems to be illogical;

On the whole it seems that Euro Plus Reward is either a very good supplement for the coursebook or a stand-alone programme for learning English. However, more video materials could be provided (perhaps on a separate CD-ROM). It's intuitive and easy to navigate, and the installation is quick.

MINIMAL REQUIREMENTS :

- IBM PC compatible with Pentium® 100MHz
- Windows 95
- 16MB RAM memory
- Video monitor with 800/600 pixels resolution and high colour
- 8 speed CD-ROM drive
- Mouse

Euro Plus + Reward Software © Young Digital Poland 1999 www.ydp.com.pl,
ydpm@ydp.com.pl

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Based on the Reward series by Simon Greenall published by Macmillan Heinemann ELT.

REPORTS FROM PAST EVENTS

IATEFL COMPUTER SIG ESADE 2000 CONFERENCE

– A PERSONAL VIEW

by Ela Gajek

gajekel@poczta.onet.pl

I had a pleasure to attend the last IATEFL Computer SIG conference “Call for the 21st century” in Barcelona. It started on 30th June and ended on 2nd July. It was organised by ESADE – Escuela de Idiomas. ESADE (Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas), a private Spanish university which is considered one of the best business schools in Spain, provided excellent facilities for the event. Air-conditioned conference rooms and terraces were the place we were having delicious Spanish food for lunch while admiring a marvellous view on the city of Barcelona. Needless to say, technology was perfectly controlled with no exceptions, from air-conditioning to all computers and the Internet connections. Not only was the place breathtaking, as Barcelona is one of the most fascinating cities in the world, but also the participants made the event unique.

Plenaries were given by Carol Chapelle, Catherine Doughty, Marta Pennington, Gavin Dudeney, Chris Tribble, Mark Warschauer. The main problem for the participants was how to be in four or five places at the same time. Among other presenters Paul Brett, David Hardisty, Vance Stevens, Ruth Vilmi are also worth mentioning. A lot of aspects of Computer Assisted Language Learning and Teaching were presented: globalisation, global and virtual classroom, changes of the teacher’s role, on-line teaching and learning systems, language teacher education, corpora, multimedia, voice recognition, video-conferencing and MOO. All the plenaries and presentations were inspiring, influential and developing.

The conference lasted only three days so it was impossible to talk to all people you wanted. It was a great pleasure to talk to Susan Linklater, who mentioned in her presentation a computer program she had used with her students. The program allows the teacher to view the students’ screens on the teacher’s computer. You have the map of the computer network on your computer – one click and you can see what a particular student is actually looking at on his or her screen.

Another interesting discovery was a presentation by Wayne Trotman who established a Computer SIG in Izmir, Turkey, in February 1999 – nine months earlier than our SIG was established. His SIG was a great success. It turned out that teachers’ problems in Turkey and Poland are similar. The only difference was that he had already solved some problems which I just faced. Wayne allowed me to follow his way in developing a Computer SIG. I hope it will work in Poland as it did in Izmir.

Some people envied Martin Peacock from The British Council Hong Kong, who had been given £22000 to check what lab setting is approved by language teachers and students. In

Hong Kong The British Council had to apply computer in all courses, because children have access to computers in all schools and they are used to learning with technology. Martin bought laptops for one group, designed some special furniture to establish PC clusters in a classroom, provided a computer with a projector as the third solution, and placed some computers at the back of the classroom, which was the fourth suggestion. The results of his research showed that one computer and a projector was the most popular solution among teachers, who had not been trained how to use computers in the classroom. What is more, it was the safest solution for children. It is shocking that even a small part of the large sum of money was not spent on teacher training. Thus, teachers, all over the world, are expected to be omniscient.

Since the event I have been waiting for the CD with all the papers presented. It was promised to be published in December 2000. I hope it will come soon and I will be able to read all the papers. Reading the articles is not the same as attending the presentation but it is the only way to satisfy my curiosity with what was said during the presentations I could not attend.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FUTURE EVENTS

IATEFL POLAND COMPUTER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP MEETING

Time: 11.00 on the 6th January, 2001

Venue: Warsaw, at Parkowa 23

Host institution: Ośrodek Edukacji Informatycznej i Zastosowań Komputerów, a computer lab with 16 computers and a projector at disposal.

Main presenters:

Teresa Olechowska will present her server

Leszek Bajkowki will talk about lexicography and its implementations in CALL

Jarosław Wiązowski will talk about teaching blind students.

Topics:

Teaching training session – sharing experience, needs analysis, teacher training tasks.

Computer SIG conference 22.06-27.06.2001

Possible speakers – if time allows:

Jarek Krajka – “Teaching English with Technology” – a new journal for teachers

Ela Gajek – the results of students’ survey and/or a new survey on language teachers’ opinions and needs

Ela Gajek,

IATEFL PL Computer SIG coordinator

gajekel@poczta.onet.pl

OPENING GATES IN TEACHER EDUCATION ONLINE CONFERENCE FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

February 12-14, 2001
<http://vcisrael.macam.ac.il>

The conference is an international meeting where “hot” issues in teacher education will be discussed. Once you register, you will have access to full text versions of all the presentations, which include papers, posters, forums, roundtable discussions and virtual tours and will be able to meet the presenters and discuss the issues with them “live.” Our presenters come from all over the world and promise to give a global perspective on issues in teacher education. Keynotes and guest speakers include Prof. Ken Zeichner, Prof. Abe Tannenbaum, Prof. Gaby Salomon, Prof. Reuven Feuerstein, Mauri Collins, Prof. Sid Strauss, Prof. Shezaf Raphaeli and more!

There will be practice sessions in using the technology before the conference, and during the conference there will be workshops and additional social events.

Jean Vermel and Elaine Hoter
Conference Co-Conveners
vc@macam.ac.il

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION – A SEMINAR

The Aga Khan University Centre of English Language (AKUCEL) is hosting its first tertiary-level seminar in Karachi, Pakistan on February 17 and 18, 2001 for an audience of approximately 400 participants. The theme of the Seminar is "English Language and Education". The Seminar would include plenary sessions, panel discussions, case studies, presentations, workshops, demonstrations and poster presentations in both theory and practice in the following areas: Language and Education, ELT and Information Technology, Computer Assisted Language Learning, Curriculum Design, Teacher Training, Materials Development, Language Skills Development, Testing and Evaluation.

Those interested in presenting in the Seminar should email the contact person at the address below to get more information. The deadline for submission of abstract is January 10, 2001.

Sadia Zafar

sadia.zafar@aku.edu

COMBINING THEORY AND PRACTICE: A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Puławy, Poland, 22-25 March, 2001

The British Council Teacher Education Young Learners' Project will be holding a second national young learner conference, "Combining Theory and Practice," from 22-25 March, 2001 in Puławy near Warsaw, Poland. The aim of this conference is to investigate how the preparation for teaching English to children has developed through practical activities firmly grounded in modern methodological approaches and research over the past eighteen months in Poland and the region. It has the objective of bringing together key practitioners in the field to extend and strengthen networks. The focus of this conference will be on the presentation of current theory and practice in the teaching of English to young learners, drawing on resources both inside and outside Poland, but with particular concern for their relevance to the Polish context. The conference is organised by The British Council, Poland, as part of the Teacher Education (Young Learner) Project.

Topic Areas: developments in approaches to teaching young learners, approaches to the training of teachers of young learners, current issues and trends in the young learner classroom, teaching foreign languages to children in grades 1 – 3. language across the young learner curriculum, **IT in the YL classroom**, bringing cultural awareness to children, skills and creativity for young learners, assessing and testing, new materials for teaching young learners.

If you wish to present a paper or attend the conference as a participant, please contact Daf Pawelec at the address below. We ask you to complete the registration and accommodation request form and return them to us by January 12, 2001.

Daf Pawelec
SPRITE Project Office
ul. Wschodnia 6/11
20-013 Lublin, Poland
Fax/Tel: + 48 (0) 81 743 6914
E-mail: daf.pawelec@britishcouncil.pl

PLM 2001
33RD POZNAŃ LINGUISTIC MEETING:

CHALLENGES FOR LINGUISTICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

27-29 April 2001

The 33rd Poznań Linguistic Meeting, the first PLM of the new millennium, organised by the School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland, will be devoted to discussing the challenges for linguistics in the 21st century.

The already known points on the programme of PLM 2001 are:

* a workshop on Challenges in Computer-Assisted Applied Linguistics organised by prof.

Włodzimierz Sobkowiak swlodek@ifa.amu.edu.pl of the Department of English Computer Linguistics, School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University (please find attached the organiser's call for papers)

* a workshop on Language and Global Communication organised by dr Adam Jaworski (Cardiff University) (please find attached the organiser's call for papers)

* a session on Challenges for Natural Linguistics in the 21st century organised by prof. Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk (School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań). You are invited to submit proposals of talks to the organiser: dkasia@ifa.amu.edu.pl

* a talk by prof. Dafydd Gibbon (University of Bielefeld) on Efficient documentation of endangered languages for research and applications

* other already suggested areas/topics: sociolinguistics of American dialects, evolutionary linguistics, historical linguistics, second language acquisition, computational phonetics, teaching of phonetics and phonology

To register for the conference, either as a speaker or participant, please contact PLM organisers at the address below, complete and return the enclosed reply form (either by email or by post) at your earliest convenience, but not later than the end of December.

PLM 2001

School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University

Collegium Novum

al. Niepodległości 4

61-874 Poznań

POLAND

tel: (+48 61) 829-35-06

fax: (+48 61) 829-35-05

<http://elex.amu.edu.pl/ifa/>

e-mail: plm@ifa.amu.edu.pl

PLM Organisers

Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk

Katarzyna Janicka

**CALL FOR PAPERS
to be presented at
CHALLENGES IN COMPUTER-ASSISTED APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

a CCAAL workshop on 27 April 2001

organised by the Department of English Computer Linguistics, School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University as part of the...

33 POZNAN LINGUISTIC MEETING

27-29 April 2001

Applied linguistics is thriving in Europe and in Poland. The volume of foreign language teaching, translation or dictionary-making, to name just a few areas, is reaching unprecedented heights. Computer assistance is used more and more in all these activities. While there have been conferences devoted to applied linguistics and computer support in education, we believe that the issues concerning the theoretical and practical challenges currently encountered at the interface of the two fields have not so far been addressed properly. We feel that computer-assistance is either taken for granted or treated as a (yet to be deployed) panacea for all applied linguistics problems and weaknesses.

We propose a different approach, one which is epitomised in the concept of 'challenges'. The workshop will be about the challenges of CAAL, both those which, while known, have not been faced and solved yet, and those which one may foresee in the future. We propose to identify and tackle these challenges here and now, in the workshop being part of the next Poznań Linguistic Meeting. The following is a short list of CAAL challenges which is meant to suggest and stimulate, but by no means exhaust the inventory: inflated promises and expectations, hardware and software problems, hardware and software availability, language barrier -- software localization, user interface and effectiveness, learner and teacher training, classroom integration, Internet.

As far as CAAL itself is concerned, we propose a wide view in which 'computer-assistance' may be understood in many ways, from the minimum of word-processing to the maximum of systems fully equipped in artificial intelligence and working with no continuous human supervision. Applied linguistics, in turn, is equally liberally interpreted as encompassing practical linguistic applications of linguistics, socio- and psycholinguistics, computer-science, pedagogy, media studies and others. At the interface of these wide ranges of research will be, among others, such sciences and activities as: Computer-Assisted Language Learning/Teaching/Instruction (CALL/CALT/CAI), Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT), Computer-Assisted Lexicography (CAL), Applied Corpus Linguistics (ACL), Natural Language Processing (NLP), Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)

At present we are planning to have a one-day workshop, i.e. proceedings beginning in the morning and completed by a panel discussion in the afternoon. We are planning to have half-hour slots for paper presentation and discussion. Posters will be accepted and displayed if

need arises. All proposals will be anonymously peer-reviewed before acceptance. Computer-assisted interactive presentations are encouraged. Please let us know well before the workshop what hardware and software you will need.

Persons wishing to participate in the CCAAL workshop should contact the organisers of the conference at plm@ifa.amu.edu.pl, fill in the reply form and send it back. The abstract should be sent to the undersigned at swlodek@ifa.amu.edu.pl.

Prof. Włodzimierz Sobkowiak

swlodek@ifa.amu.edu.pl

IMPLEMENTING CALL IN EFL: LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS

University of Cyprus, Nicosia

May 5th - 6th, 2001

CALL FOR PAPERS

This will be a two-day event divided into a one-day conference, which will take place on the Saturday May 5th and a one-day workshop on Sunday, May 6th. The conference aims to offer practitioners in the field a wide variety of both practical and theoretical presentations. It hopes to offer talks catering to the needs and interests of CALL beginners and veterans alike.

Papers in all areas of CALL will be considered and especially in the following areas: examples of software implementation, WWW resources implementation, research on software implementation / results on the effectiveness of software, the use of CALL to promote the four skills, the lab versus classroom question

PLENARY SPEAKERS

Chris Tribble, King's College, London University, UK

Vance Stevens, AMIDEAST, UAE

Paul Brett, University of Wolverhampton, UK

Organising Committee:

Pavlos Pavlou, University of Cyprus

Clive Newton, IATEFL

Andreas Papapavlou, University of Cyprus

Tilly Warren, IATEFL

Marina Elia, CyTEA Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou, CyTEA

Costas Constantinides, CyTEA

Proposals for contributions to the conference should be sent by 30th January 2001 to:

Pavlos Pavlou or Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou

e-mail: ppavlou@ucy.ac.cy yiansoph@cytanet.com.cy

or post it to:

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Cyprus, PO
Box 20537, 1678 Nicosia, Cyprus

For more information please e-mail yiansoph@cytanet.com.cy

EXETER CALL 2001
CALL- THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

University of Exeter, Exeter

September 1- 3 2001

This will be the ninth biennial conference to be held in Exeter on Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Previous conferences have allowed not only experts in the field, but all interested parties, to meet and discuss problems and progress in CALL in a relaxed atmosphere. Many of the papers have been published in *Computer Assisted Language Learning. An International Journal* (Swets & Zeitlinger), and bear witness to the weighty discoveries and research into this important area of modern education. If we are to work together and share our knowledge, an occasion such as the next conference provides a wonderful forum for us to do so.

To mark the opening of the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, the conference will be followed by an optional workshop on “Arabic meeting the challenge of CALL” on the afternoon of September 3.

Proposals (c.100-150 words) are invited by February 1 2001 for papers (25 mins) on any aspect of research in CALL which fits into the general theme of “CALL – The Challenge of Change.”

For further information, please contact the organisers at the address below:

(Professor) Keith Cameron,
CALL 2001 Conference,
School of Modern Languages,
Queen's Building, The University,
EXETER, EX4 4QH, (UK);
tel/fax (0)1392 264221/2; email K.C.Cameron@ex.ac.uk

NEWS

IATEFL POLAND COMPUTER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP NEWS

by Ela Gajek

IATEFL Poland Computer Special Interest Group coordinator

gajekel@poczta.onet.pl

IATEFL PL Computer SIG is a new group, which is still in the state of evolution and development.

Some facts about it:

- Last year 6 people enrolled as members. Now the group consists of 25 members and the number keeps growing.
- We started publishing a journal which you are currently reading – thanks to [Jarek Krajka](#), his initiative and hard work
- We started a non-public discussion list, which is moderated by Leszek Bajkowski.
- [The Computer SIG website](#) which is growing needs special care – Wojtek Korput takes responsibility for this
- An East European Computer SIG conference is going to be organized on 23-24.06.2001 – [Grażyna Studzinska](#) is the organizer.
- The new reform of the Polish education system demands teachers to gain knowledge and skills in the field of Information and Communication Technology applied to their subject, and answering that demand SIG members started training English teachers in many centres in Poland. The trainings cover both computer skills and methodology of using computers and the Internet in the language classroom. The British Council and INSETT Programme provide support for trainers and trainees.
- We are meeting on 6th January in Warsaw and 3rd March in Poznań 2001. The purpose of the meetings is to share our experience and provide support for each other.

Should you like to find out more about our SIG, visit our website at <http://www.iatefl.org.pl/sig/call/call1.html>. You are welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

AND CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

“Teaching English with Technology” 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.

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 Poland Computer SIG website at this URL:

<http://www.iatefl.org.pl/sig/call/callnl.htm>

The next issue of “Teaching English with Technology” will be published in March 2001. Submission deadline for the next issue is February 15, 2001.

We invite submissions covering the following categories:

- Articles: articles describing classroom practice or discussions of work in progress, being of immediate relevance to teachers, with the special focus on using technology in teaching and learning English
- Lesson plans: plans of lessons made in the Internet or using computers, set in the reality of an educational system, detailing the procedure, technical requirements, skills needed by students and teacher, together with URLs used in a lesson and any worksheets/checklists students are asked to complete
- Website reviews: discussions of websites having potential for organising Internet lessons around them or relevant in some way to the field of English language teaching
- Software reviews: reviews of language learning software, with an overall description, features of a programme, strong and weak sides, recommendation, system requirements
- 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, practical tips of advice on using features of widely available software
- News: information about events being of relevance to the teachers of English interested in using the Internet and computers in the classroom,
- Reports from Past Events: brief accounts of conferences, methodology workshops, commercial presentations, courses that relate to the field of using computer technology in teaching English
- Announcements of Future Events: as above, with contact addresses included

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)
- affiliation
- full contact details of all authors including email addresses, postal addresses, 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 "Journal Submission." Please specify in the letter what word-processing programme you are using, and preferably send an .rtf version as well.

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