

ReCALL

Newsletter

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Contents

Conference Reports

BALEAP 99	2
CAL 99	3
FDLT/TLTP Languages	5
PTLC 99 & MATISSE	7

Software Reviews

Ça sonne français	9
Ruslan 1 CD-ROM	11

Forthcoming Events	12
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Copy deadline for next issue: 30 Sept 1999

New Subject Centre

A proposal for a new **Subject Centre in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies** has been submitted under the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) initiative of the Funding Councils. It is submitted by the University of Southampton, in association with the University Council for Modern Languages. The Director will be Professor Michael Kelly at the University of Southampton. The proposal is designed to support a network of practitioners, and will be organised in two dimensions:

Central Services will be established to undertake activities which are common to the Network as a whole, and it is expected that both the CTI Centre for Modern Languages (CTICML, based in Hull) and the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT, based in London) will play a key role in providing core activities and services concerned with knowledge-brokering, including the provision of information centres, websites, newsletters, meetings, workshops and conferences.

Specialist groups will be established to cover the three key domains within the subject areas, and Central Services will work closely with these groups to provide the best possible support services to lecturers in the discipline.

A response to the proposal is expected during the Summer and we hope that the next *ReCALL Newsletter*, in November, will provide more detailed information about the new arrangements and the role of CTICML staff within the new Network.

Conference Reports

BALEAP 99

14th Conference of the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes: Issues in EAP Learning Technologies

University of Leeds

7-9 April 1999

This conference brought to Leeds those lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) who are involved with or interested in the use of Learning Technologies. A wide range of EAP practitioners and IT specialists presented their own work and saw applications of Learning Technologies to both face-to-face and distance EAP courses. Papers were organised according to 3 main themes: internet-based technology, stand-alone CALL, and audio, video, and mixed-media.

My principal interest was in the first theme, as my own presentation at this conference was of the EAP module component delivered via the University of Hull's *Merlin* internet learning environment. I was very keen to survey the field and see how colleagues at other institutions are using the medium. An important feature of internet-based technology for EAP has been the opportunities it offers for the development of students' writing skills through collaboration with their online peers. In plenary, Ruth Vilmi (Helsinki University of Technology) demonstrated the various online collaborative writing projects and software applications with which she has been experimenting over the past six years. She highlighted the social role of communication over the internet and encouraged teachers to structure programmes and tasks in ways which encourage online co-operation.

Robin Goodfellow (Open University) also stressed the value of online co-operation. He presented the theoretical background to LEO, a forthcoming online EAP course focusing on the development of vocabulary acquisition strategies. His presentation identified the need for the establishment of 'a sustained online learning community' of students, interacting and sharing information on vocabulary learn-

ing experiences. Sustaining such a community seems to be one of the major challenges facing tutors on such courses.

Several presentations took advantage of *WebCT* software's student/tutor login recording facility to analyse features of online written interaction. Aisha Walker (University of Leeds) presented an in-session academic writing course, developed using *WebCT*, and attempted to identify the development of writing skills via email. She found that her students' writing in emails remained rough throughout the course; most texts seemed to be initial drafts. This suggested that editing skills need emphasis, and that email may be better used to foster creative conflict during the discussion of ideas in the earlier stages of the writing process.

Olwyn Alexander and Sarah Price (Heriot-Watt University) gave a detailed analysis of the asynchronous written dialogues produced on their networked collaborative working environment. They also demonstrated the intriguing idea of the teacher using a *nom de plume* to pose as a student in order to stimulate or sustain an online discussion. David Catterick (University of Dundee) presented a 'Writing Up Research' short course developed using *WebCT* for on-campus delivery via the internet. He again used login records and an anonymous student questionnaire to evaluate the course. This evaluation led to his identification of the design features which need to be considered during the development of courses such as this.

Several presentations recognised the importance of IT skills to academic study in general. Susan Linklater and Esther Dunbar (University of Glasgow) showed how students on their pre-sessional EAP courses, while developing as writers in English, also learned essential IT skills such as how to search databases and use email. Similarly, Trevor Christie (University of Leeds) showed how his students developed their IT skills through their use of the internet as a resource for project writing.

The demonstrations of EAP CALL software which I saw mainly focused on listening and writing. Valerie Arndt, Carol McCullough, and Norbert Berger (University of Exeter) demonstrated *RealVideo* soft-

ware featuring custom-recorded mini-lectures. Their student exercises used the lectures to practise a variety of skills connected with approaching and using spoken texts. These included taking notes (a choice of note-taking styles was offered, e.g. mind mapping, flow charts or bullet points), analysing discourse structure and signalling through intonation and lexis, and a very useful exercise in rewriting a mini-lecture as a formal piece of academic writing.

Tonsillitis led Tim Kelly (University of Warwick) to give a multimedia presentation of his paper, a very informative exposition of the problems any teacher will have experienced: cavernous lecture halls, lecturers who do not stay still, OHPs which plunge the lecturer into deep shadow, microphones which pick up the air conditioning and so on. Tim's forthcoming CD-ROM, the first in the *Academic English Series* is eagerly awaited.

An application of writing theory to CALL was offered in another plenary session by Christopher Tribble (University of Reading, University of Lancaster, King's College London), who took a detailed look at the current contribution of genre-based approaches to teaching writing. He then offered ways in which generic features can be identified using corpus data, which can in turn be used to inform the teaching of academic writing. While many of the presentations looked at the development of skills, it was interesting how few of the presentations I saw dealt with developing academic reading skills. This may be because no one values developing 'scrolling down the page' as a reading skill.

Being primarily demonstrations of Learning Technologies in EAP, most presentations had little time to reflect on the future, although some discussion arose during the *EAP on the Web* forum led by Andy Gillett (University of Hertfordshire). This forum highlighted the similarities among the web-based EAP courses here, along with the different emphases in approach and skill focus. It was remarked that with such duplication of effort it was encouraging that everyone seems to be moving in the same direction. It seems certain that this forum will result in more sharing of ideas between colleagues in far-flung institutions with few local points of reference.

David Oakey
University of Hull

CAL99

Virtuality in Education: What are the future educational contexts?

London University
29-31 March 1999

Computer Aided Learning (CAL) 99 was a multi-disciplinary, cross-curricular conference sponsored by Elsevier Science. It took place at the London Institute of Education at the end of March. While few of the 100-plus presentations and 50 poster sessions dealt directly with language learning, the underlying themes of the conference - the uses of C & IT for the purposes of developing autonomous, lifelong learners, supporting learning communities and communities of practice, the application of constructivist principles within virtual learning environments (VLEs) and the promotion of collaborative learning - were all of great interest to the language educator.

The conference was not, however, limited to academic issues. Of particular interest was a point raised during a discussion session by a Nigerian participant whose students, as he pointed out, may have access only to a single computer for their whole class. Although this observation was not followed up further, it was certainly relevant and salutary, underlining, as it does, the privileged position in which we, in the west, find ourselves.

CAL 99 was attended by more than 200 participants, a large number of whom were from Northern Europe and the UK. Presentations were classified according to their relevance to the several strands of the conference, including:

- The Changing Role of the Learner
- The Changing Role of the Teacher
- Continuing Professional Development
- Learning Communities
- Identity in Virtual Educational Environments
- Learning in Public
- Learning in the Home
- Learning at Work
- Virtuality and Institutions
- Theories of Learning and Virtuality
- Virtuality and the Curriculum
- New Forms of Educational Software

Language-learning-related presentations were not restricted to a single theme. Indeed, they were to be found in the strands concerning the changing role of the learner, learning communities and new forms of educational software, demonstrating that language researchers are not confining their investigations to a single area.

Markus Kötter presented **Taking the distance out of distance learning** on behalf of the team involved in research into the use of voice-over-internet technology at the Centre for Modern Languages at the Open University. He described the use of synchronous, Internet-based audio-conferencing with groups of learners from the first German and final French courses during the period from November 1998 to January 1999. These students, he pointed out, were all based at a distance from each other and from their tutors and used the audio-conferencing tool to participate in real-time, task-based activities which have been designed to promote collaborative, student-led, autonomous language learning and to develop communities of language learners who may never meet each other in a face-to-face situation. Feedback from learners who have participated in these trials has been favourable, it was reported, and a new set of trials began in March 1999.

With Randall Donaldson of Loyola College, Maryland, Markus Kötter outlined research using MOO (multi-user domain object oriented) to promote tandem language learning between groups of German native speakers in Germany, and English native speakers based in the USA. In **Fostering learner collaboration in an on-line environment - language learning in the MOO**, the presenters provided an overview of a project they carried out in the spring of 1998, in which they attempted to transfer the use of tandem language learning principles from the asynchronous VLE offered by email to the synchronous and asynchronous VLE of MOO. It was found that learners formed learning partnerships and personal relationships and that students indeed drew on their partner's competence in their target language in a variety of ways. The text-based nature of the VLE was also said to play a role in encouraging learners to become more responsible for structuring the learning process, by offering learners equal opportunities to take the floor, by

allowing them to break out into small groups and because it was impossible for the tutor to 'see' what any learner was doing at any given time.

In **Pedagogical considerations for web-based tandem language exchange**, Christine Appel and Tony Mullen presented a pedagogically-driven, web-based VLE for tandem language learning. They described the way in which their VLE supports the principles of tandem language learning, that is reciprocity, bilingualism and learner autonomy. The presenters explained that the VLE they have been developing provides learners with features not available to them in standard email packages, and also offers them an environment which is intended specifically for language learning purposes. Using CGI scripts, this VLE allows learners to identify their partners' corrections more easily than using standard email packages and shows the amount of each language which is used in any tandem partnership. The presenters pointed out that this is something which standard email packages do not allow, and that analysis of many tandem email exchanges reveals that the language of the 'stronger' partner often dominates, thus violating the principle of reciprocity. Appel and Mullen discussed possible future developments to enhance the pedagogical advantage of this VLE, all of which, they believe, would allow facilitators to help learners develop their autonomy.

Representing the research collaboration between the Centre for Modern Languages and the Knowledge Media Institute at the Open University, Lesley Shield and Craig Rodine discussed the criteria used for choosing tools for an audiographic VLE to support distance language learners. **The right tools for the job - criteria for the choice of tools in the design of a virtual, interactive environment for distance language learners and their tutors** provided an overview of the route by which the team had come to its present solution, describing the use of telephone conferencing, Internet-based audio conferencing and an audiographic VLE. They argued that if the VLE is to provide an opportunity for real learning, as opposed to practice alone, a structured approach to the design of both VLE and the learning activities it supports is essential in order to allow for the development of autonomous learners who are able to monitor and evaluate their own

progress. They concluded by looking to the future and the development of an integrated, rather than hybrid, solution.

While language learning was not heavily represented at this conference, CAL99 was an excellent forum at which to view the use of new technologies for teaching and learning across the curriculum, from architecture to medicine. Having attended this type of conference in the past, I was struck by the amount of research which is now being carried out into the effect on learning and teaching via these new media, and the concentration on pedagogy rather than technology which is now coming to the fore.

Lesley Shield
Open University

An agenda for change: FDTL and TLTP3 ALLADIN and the teaching and learning of languages in Higher Education

Leeds Metropolitan University
7-8 May 1999

I think all participants found this a useful conference in terms of updating themselves on the work of the FDTL (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) projects in the languages area. Project members also benefited from the contact and exchange of information and ideas, and there were good examples of teamwork between the projects. The plenary sessions are reported below. In addition I attended optional sessions given by projects focusing on assessment, peer observation, and independent learning and found much of interest in all of them. There was an exhibition area displaying projects' materials, where it was possible to chat informally with project staff.

In **Strategies for Change**, Prof Michael Kelly, Chair of the FDTL Co-ordinating Group for Languages, drew some preliminary lessons from the FDTL Languages experience. A strategy involves both activity and direction: in the FDTL context the funding councils provided the direction and the projects generated the activities. HEFCE/DENI di-

rection had been the dissemination of good practice via projects based on consortia of universities.

Two issues rose with respect to dissemination of good practice, one being that TQA was a fairly crude tool with which to identify good practice. The other was that dissemination of good practice is itself part of a process in which good practice is not static, and is refined in the process of being transmitted. This was described in terms of the knowledge process, comprising development, transmission and application, with the three processes being continuous and iterative.

The FDTL consortia approach had been a 'lead institution with partners' model, but in fact projects had experienced success by sharing good practice, rather than pursuing a trickle-down approach with the associated risk of 'not-invented-here' resistance.

The 'project' orientation of the funding, assembling a team for a finite timescale to produce products or outcomes, sits on top of an institutional structure which is not project-based and this can cause some problems. Amongst these are the competing priorities experienced by permanent academic staff on the project, the loss of short-term contract staff before the end of the project and increasing casualisation of the HE work force, arising both from employment of short-term project staff and buying in hourly-paid staff to cover academic time.

The distinctive strengths of which FDTL Language projects were proud were the degree of co-ordination and co-operation achieved between projects, and the innovative Co-ordinating Group for Languages which had allowed projects to achieve a wider impact. Within the Group, synergies in the areas of *Independent Learning*, *Residence Abroad* and *Staff Development* had been fostered. A key innovation had been the partnership with CILT, whose experience and background were valuable in focusing and co-ordinating the group. It was felt that the FDTL projects have had an impact at European level as well as nationally. The projects have highlighted the significant number of academic staff committed to teaching and learning, and the growing expertise amongst project, support and secretarial staff in this area.

Bahram Bekradnia, HEFCE Director of Policy, took **Learning and teaching: an agenda for change** as his title, and provided much useful information about the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, which will support the council's learning and teaching strategy. He stressed the need for enhancement across all of HE, rather than extending the approach whereby good practice was rewarded. The QA process was not sufficiently mature, and making extra funds available to highly rated departments was not fair in principle from the point of view of individual students.

He felt the FDTL approach had been important in improving the profile of teaching and countering the attention devoted to the Research Assessment Exercise. The new TQA funds would be split into three streams - *institutional*, *subject-based*, and *individual*. The subject-based funding would support FDTL 3, the new Learning and Teaching Subject Networks (which will replace the CTI Centres with their focus on technology) and a Generic Learning and Teaching Centre.

Details of the institutional and individual funding have yet to be worked out, but it is envisaged that institutions will develop a teaching and learning strategy and then be able to apply for funding for it. Work experience, key skills and developing and promoting staff would be key areas. Individuals may be funded for activities such as creating teaching materials but work is needed on how this will relate to institutional funding.

A third plenary consisted of a Panel Presentation, in which a variety of project staff gave short presentations about work in their project area. The projects are grouped into *Transferable Skills* (TRANSLANG); *Independent Learning* (CIEL, SMILE, ALLADIN and WELL); *Staff Development* (DOPLA, DEVELOP); *Assessment*; and *Residence Abroad* (LARA, RAP and IP). Regular *ReCALL Newsletter* readers will be familiar with all these acronyms and new readers should consult <http://lang.fdtl.ac.uk/> where there is an overview of the projects, and links to individual project web sites.

The final plenary speaker was Frank Pignatelli, Chief Executive of Scottish Business in the Community, who gave a very entertaining but thought provoking speech on **The Nuffield Languages Inquiry**. Frank has a background in education pro-

vision and is currently President of the Scottish Association of Language Teaching. He is a member of the Nuffield Inquiry, as is Mike Kelly.

The Inquiry is charged with identifying what capability in languages will be needed in 20 years, examining present policies in the light of this and assessing what additional strategic planning and initiative will be necessary.

A major issue concerns the value and relevance of language study, often not perceived in the wider community. Parents, politicians and employers need to be convinced that it is valuable and relevant. In particular, the enhancement of communication skills is crucial in any current justification of language study and is sometimes neglected.

A variety of illuminating facts and figures on topics ranging from language distribution to business competence in languages were presented. The post-16 crisis in MFL, where 9 out of 10 discontinue the study of a language in the UK, the domination of French and the great potential of adult education were highlighted. Controversially, the need for a statutory requirement to learn a language was questioned.

Frank Pignatelli feared that the committee might founder on the maxim 'the best is the enemy of the good', but hoped that if the report was focused and raised key issues and if Nuffield had an advocacy and dissemination phase the outcome would be very positive.

It was necessary to raise the status of language teaching, perhaps in an way analogous to that in which Lucozade had moved its advertising from the sick bed to the gym !

Jenny Parsons
University of Hull

Note: The FDTL Languages projects are staging a final conference 3-5 July 2000. Entitled **Teaching Modern Languages in Universities in the 21st Century**, the conference will be a collaborative venture involving CILT, the University Council for Modern Languages, the Standing Conference of Heads of Modern Languages and FDTL Modern Languages. Contact details are given in the events listing on the back page.

PTLC99 & MATISSE Conferences in Phonetics and Speech Science Education

If the impression is accurate that the future of CALL with reference to pronunciation training and phonetic competence will be marked by developments in the interactive learning of Speech Sciences and multimedia methods for Education in Speech and Language Therapy, then two recent conferences illustrate the kind of initiatives that may some day be adapted and incorporated into foreign language learning and teaching.

PTLC99: Phonetics Teaching and Learning Conference

University College, London
14-15 April 1999

<http://pitch.phon.ucl.ac.uk/project/siphtra.htm>

Contact: John Maidment, johnm@phonetics.ucl.ac.uk

Attracting some 50 participants from over 15 countries and organised under the auspices of a UK HE FDTL project, SIPhTrA (System for Interactive Phonetics Training and Assessment), this conference focused specifically on the teaching and learning of phonetics. It covered a rich range, from the details of SIPhTrA itself and general national approaches to phonetics teaching, to learners' views, ear-training, phonemic transcription and the problematics of an articulatory route to vowel teaching.

In trying to distil the issues which I personally find most significant, I would highlight:

- the development of visual displays of complex phonetic phenomena in ways intelligible to the non-scientist, and especially the promising results of interactive visual feedback on intonation improvement;
- the equally promising results of EFL phonometaphonological training with primary-level children;
- multimedia enhancement of articulatory phonetics training as a solution to large-scale delivery.

What I also retain is the openness, friendliness, commitment and sheer enthusiasm of a community that was new to me.

MATISSE: Method and Tool Innovations for Speech Science Education

University College, London
16-17 April 1999

<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/matisse/home.htm>

Contact: Valerie Hazan, v.hazan@phon.ucl.ac.uk

This substantially larger, but no less welcoming, 'sister' conference was held under the aegis of ESCA, the European Speech Communication Association, which links over 100 institutions from 22 European countries, a large proportion of them represented at the conference.

The location - the Centre for the Magic Arts, home of the Magic Circle - may be considered indicative of the wonder aroused by so many of the aspects covered. One immediate memory is of Laryngograph's Lx Speech Studio and its Speech Pattern Element which displays in real time 'the perceptual features of loudness; pitch; voice quality; rhythm; nasality; frication.' But there was more, much more. We moved between

- simulation of hearing impairment and efforts to create an artificial mouth
- a completely computer-delivered spectrogram reading course and creating a work-bench for speech analysis basics;
- curricular issues and visualised speech-processing experiments;
- web-based speech technology tools and the use of animated 'conversational agents' with profoundly deaf children.

The presentation of the latter I found particularly impressive in the way the system, via the head of Baldi, a computer-generated expert (part of the CSLU-OGI Toolkit* and used in other reported developments too) responds interactively to correct inaccurate input: a missing final // in mail, for instance, is vividly illustrated by fading out Baldi in

profile to leave his bright green tongue which executes the appropriate articulation - not only an apparently effective corrective procedure but an example of how an animated agent may provide different and probably more information than the human.

There was one session specifically on language learning, with papers on using hypermedia for phonetics and phonology teaching; prosodic models for self-learning activities; designing interactive French Intonation exercises; and large-scale implementation of speech analysis tools for Swedish as a second language.

Summary

Perhaps the best summary of the current situation is to repeat sentiments expressed by various speakers in different ways: we are all waiting for 'research breakthroughs in auditory-visual speech generation, recognition and analysis; natural language understanding; discourse and dialogue modelling; and social interaction.' (Ron Cole, CSLU-Boulder*). In the meantime, CALLers should arguably be articulating and co-ordinating their desiderata for the next technological wave.

Douglas Jamieson
University of Hull

* CLSU is the Centre for Spoken Language Understanding. CSLU-OGI is based at the Oregon Graduate Institute of Science and Technology, <http://cslu.cse.ogi.edu/>. CSLU-Boulder is based at the University of Colorado, <http://cslu.colorado.edu/>

Some other Web-sites you might like to explore:

<http://www.sens.com/SPP1.htm>

[speech perception]

<http://pan.hf.ntu.no/socrates/textbooks.html>

<http://www.laryngograph.com>

<http://coral.lili.uni-bielefeld.de/MuMeT2>

[interactive phonetics]

Teaching European Literature & Culture with C&IT

<http://info.ox.ac.uk/ctitext/publish/occas/eurolit/index.html>

This is a collection of selected papers from a conference of the same name organised by CTI Textual Studies. The papers outline a rich range of approaches to the teaching of analytical and critical skills in literary and cultural studies. They document and reflect on the successes or otherwise of a diverse group of projects and teaching situations and offer a solid set of signposts and critical issues for others seeking to follow their example in related fields.

Two papers of particular interest to ReCALL Newsletter readers are *Teachers and Technicians: working together for effective use of Information Technology in Language and Literature* (Gavin Burnage, University of Cambridge) and *A Season in Cyberspace: Reflecting on web-based resources for French Studies* (Tony McNeill, University of Sunderland).

CTI Modern Languages Open Days 1999

Wednesday 28 July

Wednesday 18 August

Wednesday 22 September

Monday 20 December

Bookings at <http://www.hull.ac.uk/cti/services.htm>

<http://www.ias.et.tu-dresden.de/kom/lehre>

[tutorial]

<http://www.tu-cottbus.de/speech-analysis/>

<http://www ldc.lu.se/~logopedi/>

[various]

<http://www.speech.kth.se/snack/>

[sound visualisation]

Software Reviews

Ça sonne français

Authors: Concept and content Douglas Jamieson, programming John Langdon, Cédric Fleury, co-ordination Paul Hickman

Supplier: Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH, UK. Tel 0171 8736246, Fax 01235 400445, orders@bookpoint.co.uk, http://www.hull.ac.uk/cti/tell.htm

System requirements: 486 processor or higher, 8MB RAM, 5 MB hard disk space, x8 CD-ROM drive, 16-bit soundcard, speakers, microphone, Windows 3.1 or higher.

Price: Single user £49.95 + VAT, 10 pack £350 + VAT.

Ça sonne français is an introductory self-access course in French phonetics, aimed primarily at first or second year undergraduates. What makes it different to anything else on the market is the fact that the sounds of French are explored and learnt through a multi-media CD-ROM package, involving audio (learners listen to the sounds in context and can also record themselves), video (they watch native speakers articulate the sounds in conversation), text (further information is read on screen) and graphics (IPA symbols and diagrams of the speech organs). There is also a *Help* function where detailed information on a given topic can be obtained, a *Pardon?* facility which allows the student to replay the video, and the possibility of recording themselves if they wish. The CD-ROM comes with an accompanying manual which, in addition to practical information on running the program, provides a series of exercises on the material.

This is a very impressive package, one which we intend to use with our first and second year students from next academic year. One of the attractive features is the fact that it functions at two distinct levels - *Premiers pas* and *En détail*, which differ in terms of the depth of treatment of the sounds, the level of technical complexity and the balance of English and French in the presentation. The *Menu principal* offers first an *Introduction* which sets out succinctly the aims and objectives, gives us a brief flavour of what is to come by using a selection of

video clips (thereby also conveying the sense of humour and fun which characterizes the package), and, perhaps most importantly, sets the study of French phonetics firmly in the context of communication, such that students understand that a deeper knowledge of the sounds of the language will enable them to 'sound more French'. My only reservation about an otherwise punchy and dynamic *Introduction* concerns the very first video clip which is inaudible, and may cause unsuspecting users to try to adjust their set!

Premiers pas could be used either as a basic introduction to pronunciation for first-year students or a 'taster' for the more complex level *En détail*. It begins with an introduction to the characters appearing in the video (a management training video) and the different situations in which they find themselves, thereby at one and the same time initiating the user into the learning techniques used throughout and reinforcing the message that the sounds being studied are to be explored in different communicative situations. Students are introduced in lay terms to the basics of intonation, rhythmic units, syllables and liaison, stress, and finally the sounds of French. The explanatory text is in English with full orthographic transcriptions in French, and the terminology is for the most part non-technical. The final section on the vowels and consonants of French concentrates on the difficult sounds for language learners, such as the [y]/[u] distinction, the [ɛ]/[œ] distinction, the uvular [r]. While I see the purpose of introducing a small number of phonetic symbols at this stage, I am not sure that the introduction without explanation of the terms *stop*, *fricative*, *nasal* and *liquid* is helpful. Moreover, the section on difficult sounds could usefully include some basic non-technical hints on their articulation; as well as listening and imitating, the user would benefit from knowing how to articulate the difference between, say, [y] and [u], or how to produce the French [r]. Nonetheless, this is a very accessible and useful introductory level.

The move to the second and major section, *En détail*, constitutes a considerable leap in terms of difficulty. It is structured in five sections, *Sons*, *En*

contact (syllables et liaisons), *Chaîne parlée* (breath groups, stress and rhythmic groups), *Intonation* and *Transcription phonétique*, each with considerable layers of subsections and subsubsections. Under a given topic in the first four sections, the general principle is (i) to explain the phenomenon in detail via the text and using technical terms, (ii) to use a variety of audio and video clips with accompanying text and graphics, (iii) to allow the user to record themselves, (iv) to elaborate on any particular difficulties for language learners. By way of example, detailed discussion of [y] appears in the *voyelles* subsection of *Sons*, where the five sets of vowels are discussed. In the front rounded category, the text explains the basic characteristics of lip-rounding and the three degrees of aperture found, and gives examples of French words containing the sounds [y], [ɛ] and [œ]. By clicking on [y], we see first a frozen video clip as a speaker articulates [y] (allowing the user to focus on the articulation); the text then reinforces (in French) its phonetic description as a close rounded vowel and its symbol; we see an orthographic transcription of the phrase in which it occurs as we hear the clip; we then see the video clip of the word(s) in which it occurs (which stops at precisely the point of articulation) with the phonetic and orthographic transcription appearing in the text; this is reinforced by another example of [y] in context, this time with text, phonetic transcription and video simultaneously; the point is made in the text that the articulation is the same in both stressed and unstressed contexts and this is reinforced by a video clip with orthographic and phonetic transcription; finally the difficulty of the [y]/[u] distinction is highlighted and examples of the sounds juxtaposed in context are given with the video clip, orthographic and phonetic transcription. To take a very different phenomenon, the intonation pattern in yes/no questions comes under *le ton montant*, where it is explained in the text (in French) as one possible context for rising intonation. Examples are first given with an orthographic transcription in the text, to which the video clip is then added. In addition to different types of intonation, three types of phrase are then illustrated (*énonciative, interrogative, impérative*), with video, audio and textual support.

There are some possible improvements which would make the package even better. Under *Transcription phonétique*, it would be useful to hear some of the sounds as well as simply reading text, especially as regards the *mots fréquents* and the *mots difficiles*. Amongst the four types of *Intonation* features *le ton implicatif* which, unlike the other types which are self explanatory (*le ton uni, montant* or *descendant*), is a mixed bag containing a variety of intonation patterns which are not explained or explored. The definition of *liaison* is also rather elliptical in comparison to other sections. As far as the sounds are concerned, the learner's first encounter with the vowels and their symbols is in a list from the most frequent to the least, rather than a format which makes clear their positioning in the mouth; the latter would in my opinion be an easier framework for learners. In general, in the explanation of the vowels, tongue position as front or back is rather neglected, with only degree of aperture and lip rounding given an important role in the description; had tongue position enjoyed a greater profile, it would for example have been easier to explain the [y]/[u] distinction. Similarly, with the consonants, the place of articulation and the accompanying terminology (*palatal, velar* etc.) probably needs reinforcing in the presentation for most learners, as does the voiced/voiceless distinction and the nasal/oral one. In all cases, these problems would have been solved with a better reference to the *Help* facility, where all such difficulties are fully explained with diagrams etc. Indeed, if there was one general improvement to be made to *Ça sonne français*, it would be more cross referencing to *Help* which is a veritable mine of information, set out in an easily accessible fashion. It would be worth considering publishing it as an accompanying reference text. More exercises on screen would also be useful. Nonetheless, these criticisms are to be taken in context. *Ça sonne français* is a high-quality user-friendly package which introduces learners to the theory through an interactive multi-media exploration of communicative contexts and which leaves the learner feeling that phonetics is fun.

Janice Carruthers

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Ruslan 1 CD-ROM

Authors: Dialogues by Natalya Veshnyeva and John Langran, exercises by John Langran. Programmed and produced by Mike Beilby using Asymetrix Toolbook.

Supplier: Ruslan Ltd, 19 Highfield Road, Birmingham, B13 9HL, UK. Tel 0121 449 1578, Fax 0121 449 1578, Email JohnLangran@Compuserve.com, URL <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/johnlangran/>
System Requirements: Minimum 486 66mhz processor, 16mb RAM, 4x speed CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1 or 95

Price: Single user £39; £27.30 for those who have bought the Ruslan 1 book. Postage and packing £1. Additional copies for multiple use in schools £13.

This CD-ROM is a multimedia version of the *Ruslan Russian 1* course book with a few additional resources. The CD-ROM could be used for independent study or in the class as a source of additional practice material. The user could be a complete beginner or a person with some previous knowledge of the language wishing to revise vocabulary or a few grammatical points. The program is quite easy to use for a person who normally does not get along with modern technology.

Ruslan 1 CD-ROM consists of 3 sections: **Introduction**, **10 Lessons** and **Resources**. The **Introduction** section gives advice on how to make the best use of the program depending on learner's needs. It even provides you with information on how to find a class or a teacher in the UK or a language course in Russia, which I found most unusual but which would be extremely useful if you were an independent learner. In this section you will also find a grammatical and structural introduction to the Russian language, a guide to the alphabet and pronunciation and a few clips from the video *Moscow for you*.

The **10 Lessons** section consists of tips on how to use each lesson; topical dialogues with *translate* and *listen* options; explanations of grammatical phenomena; cultural notes and lots of exercises. Most of the exercises are the same as in the *Ruslan 1* course book; some of them are interactive and some are listening exercises. I did find some of the exercises pretty similar and not particularly enjoy-

able, for example, drag the captions/translations/red words, etc. into the gaps.

The **Resources** section consists of a glossary of grammar terms, grammar reviews, scripts of listening texts, word lists and hints for travellers.

As a user of the *Ruslan 1* course book I would definitely advise my students to use this CD-ROM as I think it provides a very good source of additional practice material. I also enjoyed the hints for travellers section which provides you with a wide range of extremely useful information, from obtaining a Russian visa and medical advice to ways of getting around the country, from Russian superstitions to making toasts at a party.

Olga Ivanova
University of Hull

Practice Makes Perfect

Practice Makes Perfect CD-ROMs are available in French, German, and Spanish. They are beginner/intermediate level programs for vocabulary acquisition and include speech recognition. A short review of *Practice Makes Perfect German* by Colin Perry (formerly University College London) has been published on the CTICML website at <http://www.hull.ac.uk/cti/resources/reviews/revlist.htm>

ALT-C 99

21-23 September 1999

University of Bristol

This year the annual conference of the *Association for Learning Technology* is running discipline-specific sessions in collaboration with CTI Centres. The Modern Languages sessions will take place on 22 September 1999. A day rate of £105.00, including lunch, tea and coffee, allows delegates to attend the subject-specific and generic sessions, including keynote speakers, papers, works-in-progress, and interactive presentations. To book as a day delegate, use the 'special requirements' section of the booking form circulated with this newsletter or book online via the website at <http://www.ilrt.bristol.ac.uk/alt-c99/>

Forthcoming Events

1 - 2 July 1999, Jyväskylä, Finland

**European Language Council Second Conference:
Language Teaching and Learning: New Directions
for Higher Education in Europe**

Information: Tau-Maija Heilala, Congress Manager,
CMM, Confennia Ltd, PO Box 35 (AIL), FIN-40351
Jyväskylä, Finland.

Tel: +358 14 603 663, Fax: +358 14 603 727

19-20 July 1999, Oxford, UK

Oxford ICT in Classics Conference

Information : Julian Morgan, 81 High St, Pitsford,
Northants, NN6 9AD, United Kingdom
Tel (01604) 880119, Julian@JPROGS.source.co.uk,
<http://www.source.co.uk/users/jprogs/>

6-8 September 1999, York, UK

**7th Improving Student Learning Symposium:
Improving Student Learning Through the Disci-
plines**

Information: Felix Lam, f.lam@brookes.ac.uk, [http://
www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/isl/isltop.html](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/isl/isltop.html),
Tel +44 (0)1865 484620, Fax +44 (0)1865 484622

9-11 September 1999, Exeter, UK

8th International Exeter CALL Conference

Information: Keith Cameron, CALL '99, School of
Modern Languages, Queen's Building, The Univer-
sity, Exeter EX4 4LE, UK.

Tel +44 (0)1392 264221/2, k.c.cameron@ex.ac.uk,

16-18 September 1999, Besançon, France

EUROCALL 99

Information: Thierry Chanier, Laboratoire
d'Informatique de Besançon, Université de Franche-
Comté, France, <http://eurocall99.univ-fcomte.fr/>
Tel: +33 3 81 58 84 70, Fax: +33 3 81 66 64 50,
eurocall99@lib.univ-fcomte.fr

17-19 September 1999, Prague, Czech Republic

**LSP Forum '99: International Conference on
Teaching Languages for Specific/Academic
Purposes in Universities**

Information: Dr Marta Chromá, Charles University,
Law Faculty, Nám. Curieových 7, 116 40 Praha,
Czech Republic

Tel: +42 (2)21005387, Fax: +42 (2)24810472,

chroma@ius.prf.cuni.cz

21-23 September 1999, Bristol, UK

**ALT-C 99 6th International Conference: The
Learning Technology Life-Cycle**

Information: Sara Hassen, In Any Event UK, 1
Riverside, St. Anne's Road, Bristol BS4 4ED, UK

Tel: +44 (0)117 977 9477, Fax: +44 (0)117 972

4345, enquiries@inanyevent-uk.com, [http://
www.iltt.bris.ac.uk/alt-c99/](http://www.iltt.bris.ac.uk/alt-c99/)

24-26 November, 1999, Berlin, Germany

**Online Educa Berlin 1999: 5th International Con-
ference on Technology Supported Learning**

Information: Astrid Jaeger, ICEF Berlin, Niebuhrstr.
69a, 10629 Berlin.

Tel: 49-(0)30-327 61 40, Fax: 49-(0)30-324 98 33,

ICEFBerlin@aol.com, <http://www.online-educa.com>

11 - 13 December 1999, Leeds, UK

**4th Annual Cross-Cultural Capability Conference:
Mapping the Territory: the Poetics and Praxis of
Languages and Intercultural Communication**

Information: Joy Kelly, Centre for Language Study,
Leeds Metropolitan University, Beckett Park Cam-
pus, Leeds, LS6 3QS

Tel: +44 (0)113 283 7440, Fax: +44 (0)113 274 5966

30 June - 2 July 2000 Derby, UK

Language World

Information: Educational Exhibitions, 14
Gainsborough Gardens, London N12 8AG.

Tel: +44 (0)181 445 1757, Fax: +44 (0)181 446

8214, amanda@educexhibitions.demon.co.uk

3-5 July 2000, Nottingham, UK

**Teaching Modern Languages in Universities in the
21st Century**

Information: CILT Conferences, 20 Bedfordbury,
London WC2N 4BL, UK. Tel 0171 3795101 ext 240,
Fax 0171 379 5082, alison.cutler@cilt.org.uk

31 August - 2 September 2000, Dundee, UK

EUROCALL 2000

Information: EUROCALL, CTI Centre for Modern
Languages, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1482 465872, Fax: +44 (0)1482 473816,

EUROCALL@Hull.ac.uk

Visit our full CALL-related events listing at <http://www.hull.ac.uk/cti/resources/calendar.htm>