

# ReCALL

## Newsletter

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**Copy deadline for next issue:  
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## CALL in Higher Education

### Case Study: University of Central Lancashire

Within the Department of Languages IT has taken off over the past 5 years. This has been due to a number of factors:

- Staff interest - computer literacy has risen from less than 50% 5 yrs ago, to a healthy 100%, with staff employing the Internet, Email, word-processing, and PC-supported presentation;
- Student need - students are expected to benefit from the transferable skills, to produce word-processed assignments, employ CALL;
- The development of the Language Learning Centre (LLC) and the application of self access and student centred learning support systems;
- The University Mission and devolving training responsibilities for IT to departmental level.

The result is that the use of CALL and new technologies, such as video-conferencing and computer-conferencing have an extremely high profile. Staff and students receive thorough training in IT, and the commitment to further exploiting IT is evident in a number of initiatives, one of the most important being the work of the Research & Development CALL Team.

Languages are taught on an IWLP (approximately 14 languages and levels), and there are 7 main degree languages (French, German, Spanish, EFL, Italian, Chinese, Japanese), with entry levels rang-

ing from *ab initio* to post GCSE and post A-level.

### Equipment

Students access networked PCs across the university. There is a faculty PC room in the Language Learning Centre, with a further 10 language-dedicated, stand-alone PCs for use with Vektor and other multimedia CD-ROMs. In addition there is a multimedia language teaching lab. Three teaching rooms are networked and there is an ISDN video conference link in the Department of Languages. Staff have access to 486 PCs at a ratio of 1:2 members of staff.

### Software use

The range of CALL software includes the latest interactive CD-ROMs and TELL Consortium materials, and old favourites on the network. Software is used on a self access basis or for directed tasks as part of language learning programmes. Students receive training in its use via staff-run Induction Programmes and on a need-to-know basis. Software use is supported through laminated course-specific CALL guidance cards in the LLC. Staff training programmes are run by the R&D CALL team and staff experts. These disseminate information on new software for languages, and support the use of Internet, Email, video-conferencing etc.

Grammar support is provided with a range of software. *TUCO*, *Luisa* and *Un Menu Français* offer remedial grammar support as part of teaching programmes but are also available for self access. In addition *GramEx* and other TELL Consortium packages are employed for remedial work at higher levels.

*Fun with Texts* and *LinguaWrite* are available via the network to first year language learners. A number of texts have been authored in *Fun with Texts*, providing supplementary lecture programme reading and also developing structural awareness and summary writing skills. *LinguaWrite* is popular when teaching first year letter writing skills and is used alongside Paul Hartley's *Business Correspondence Courses*.

The R&D CALL Team contains representatives from key language subjects in the Department and alongside developmental work, they coordinate

the purchase and evaluation of new software. As a result there is a diverse range of more than 16 CD-ROMs used in the Department, which subject teams incorporate into their teaching and learning using learning resource cards. The Department made an appreciable investment in Vektor products when establishing the LLC, acquiring all the *European* and *Personal Connections* laser discs for 6 languages. In addition we have purchased the *Expressions* CD-ROMs and the language lab support materials. As a result the Department is a 'Centre for Excellence' for Vektor in the UK. The *English Connections* materials have been used with great success but other materials have been the subject of a number of initiatives by the Materials Development Team, concentrating on adapting these materials for teaching *ab initio* and intermediate learners. Dialogues selected by staff are practised by students using Vektor and these then form models for role play practice in class.

Minority languages in the Department such as Urdu, Chinese and Japanese have prioritised the development of CALL support. They concentrate on word processing, and software to practice and produce the various scripts in the first instance, but there are also a number of CD-ROMs for the *ab initio* students, which provide basic phrase and dialogue practice, and cultural information.

A number of other applications for new communications technologies such as Email, the Internet, and *First Class* computer-conferencing, are also employed by the Department. *First Class* is currently the focus of a project for part-time language learners in Spanish, which is operating locally, and computer conferencing is being used to support EFL teaching, providing tutor support, peer group contact and links with students in the Far East. The EFL Department has also made considerable use of video-conferencing and has been running lecture programmes and group seminars via this medium. In addition Business German finalists apply their knowledge of German companies and business management in a 3-way internationally-run business game, which is supported and organised via video-conferencing - an example of how sharing resources with partner institutions abroad can benefit the language learning experience of students. Finally Email and the Internet are being

used for staff-student communication, for a pilot promoting contact and language practice between EFL and foreign language students, and of course as a rich source for research.

### Conclusion

Much has been done with IT in the Department of Languages and although the Department is committed and enthusiastic about the activities mentioned, there is also a lot of hard work involved. Pressure is put on staff time, and considerable effort goes into maintaining staff skills in the first instance, and passing on these skills to students. The onus is also on staff to be seen to be using IT in order to promote equivalent use among students. It is not enough to take the horse - as it were - to the water. Students have to be convinced of the effectiveness and applicability of IT in languages. Techniques used in the Department to achieve this include portfolio-based learning, assignments and designated tasks, and emphasis is placed on the relevance of IT to working life. Though integration of IT is regarded as largely successful, staff remain concerned about motivating students and managing the balance of achieving the necessary amount of coursework alongside developing other essential skills. This continues to provide the Department and its teaching teams with a huge challenge as language teaching enters the 21st century.

*Ruth Pilkington  
Department of Languages  
University of Central Lancashire*

## Case Study: University of Hull

### Swedes go TT!

The Scandinavian Studies Department at Hull has gone TT! No, colleagues haven't given up the demon drink or started racing motorbikes on the Isle of Man. In the summer of 1996 we became the latest in a long line of converts to the *TransIt-TIGER* (TT) translation program, and during the autumn, using the *TransIt-TIGER Authoring Shell* we produced an advanced factual Swedish-to-English package for trial this spring on a group of

hapless finalists. This package comprised the usual 10 source texts - in this case of between 350 and 450 words - with glossaries, hints and the literal translation (version A) and free translation (version B) for each source text, the whole package loaded onto the university's local network. Students found the whole experience 'realistic' if testing, as they had done nothing like this before, and they were generally positive about the methodology. The detailed feedback from this trial has allowed minor modifications to this advanced program, which I recently demonstrated to colleagues in modern language departments in Sweden. In the course of this Pauline missionary journey I was forced to express to other more sceptical colleagues exactly what it was I liked about this program, the advantages of using TT as a teaching tool as I see them, and I repeat these thoughts here.

With TT the focus of the work is shifted to the target language from the very outset, and thereby onto the central problem in translation, that of achieving a balance between faithfulness to the source text and the production of a communicative translation readily understood by the reader. Students who had concentrated for three years on learning the intricacies of Swedish soon realised that they needed to revise their knowledge of their mother tongue - several of them went straight off to buy a Thesaurus and even a copy of Swan's *Practical English Usage!*

Students learned not to trust the glossary definitions I provided, which were deliberately not dedicated to the text but often taken (slightly modified) from *Norstedts Stora svensk-engelska ordbok*, a 129,000 word dictionary used as standard by linguists and translators in Sweden. The budding translators soon realised that they had to think about possible renderings for themselves, that a dictionary does not help with problems of collocation, and that the glossary could only be employed to put them 'in the ballpark' as regards word choice.

The hints screen in the TT program allowed me to indicate a huge range of common problem areas which presented themselves in the texts: false friends, puns, problems of grammar and structure, problems of cultural transference such as proper nouns, as well as difficulties specific to Swedish as a Germanic language, such as the translation of

compounds, the use of the impersonal pronoun **man** and so on. But indicate the problem is what I did - solutions were something the student must come up with.

When using TT much greater emphasis is placed on checking, editing and neat layout in the second and final version, and this made for greatly improved presentation, almost to office standards. Some students even learned how to use the English apostrophe - surely another useful transferable skill they need to acquire?

The way we worked together as a group in a computer lab allowed a great deal of collaboration and discussion among students and between students and teacher in producing the first, draft translation. The arguments frequently got heated! The methodology as envisaged, that is teaching a unit over two sessions, provides all the advantages of collaboration and yet ultimately involves individual production.

I found advantages in using TT in a mixed ability group, as even the weaker linguists were helped by the provision of Glossary and Hints to overcome their lack of confidence and avoid 'howlers', while the already reasonably capable translators could concentrate on fine-honing the target text and improving their English punctuation. I believe the standards demanded were much higher than could be asked of finalists undergoing more traditional methods of teaching translation.

I am not a computer nerd, yet I found the *Translt-TIGER Authoring Shell* easy to manipulate, especially as nearly everything is done on an ordinary word processor. The final mixture of the ingredients and hot-linking of glossaries takes only a very short time if you have done your preparation thoroughly. One especially useful feature is the ability to check the final version as if I were a student user. It is also easy to go back and edit units after a trial run with students, even to the extent of re-ordering pre-existing units.

My only peeve - and it is a minor one - is that there are one or two unnecessary buttons to press when hot-linking glossary and hints entries to the text. When you have to repeat an operation numerous times and have to press 'OK' unnecessarily, this proves irritating.

The upshot of all this is that I have now almost

completed two further programs, this time for intermediate (i.e. second year) students of Swedish, one set from Swedish and the other into Swedish, consisting of factual texts. The set into Swedish requires more grammar help and much broader hints, as 'second year' means exactly that in the case of an *ab initio* language, in other words following directly on from the beginners' book. The aid of a native speaker is also essential here, as, however good one's knowledge of the language, writing two translations in different styles is not an easy task to get right. We are now considering extending the use of TT to our other main language, Danish, over the next 12 months. The *Translt-TIGER Authoring Shell* has also recently been used in our department on an experimental basis by a graduate student to teach Old Icelandic texts to volunteers, using two published translations as versions A and B. It might have considerable potential for the teaching of medieval texts, surely something not intended by the developers. The only potential limit to its use must be that set by 'TT-fatigue', that is using the program too often with the same group of students, but we will deal with that problem when we come to it.

*Phil Holmes*  
Department of Scandinavian Studies  
University of Hulls

## Case Study: Queen Mary and Westfield College

### The uses of CALL in the School of Modern Languages

There are six languages taught in the School of Modern Languages at Queen Mary and Westfield College: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian and Catalan. All languages except French run *ab initio* courses, and all languages except Italian and Catalan may be studied to full Honours level (Single Honours, Joint Honours, or part of the European Studies degree). The College has appointed a Language Co-ordinator for each language, who has the responsibility of co-ordinating

all aspects of language teaching in their individual subject, including the purchase and utilisation of CALL programs. From an organisational point of view the following details are worth noting:

- The College runs a Central Computing Service, with access to computers for approximately 150 students.
- The College Library has 20 workstations for student use.
- There is a separate Arts Computing Service with two members of advisory staff and 50 computers for student use, of which 15 have a CD-ROM capacity.

A variety of CALL programs are available on the College network, thereby making it possible for students to have access to these programs from all the sites listed above.

#### **The present situation of CALL at QMW**

The School organised a CALL training day in June 1996 which was run by two members of staff from the CTI Centre for Modern Languages. Many of the ideas and initiatives over the last year have derived from that very useful and informative session. Looking at languages overall, the CALL programs are found to be particularly useful for grammar instruction in beginners' courses, and also at more advanced levels, where staff are finding that there is a wide variation, within the range of students taking language studies, of students' grasp of the basic grammar structures of the language. At more advanced levels, staff have been developing their own materials, largely making use of the TELL *Translit-TIGER Authoring Shell*. There is a general consensus among the language co-ordinators that CALL programs are useful but that the quality and availability of materials is very variable; as far as multimedia material is concerned, this is the area where we would be glad of more and better materials. We have recently purchased the TELL Consortium *Spanish and Italian Encounters* CD-ROMs but there has not yet been time to evaluate them. The *Télé-Textes* CD-ROM was purchased last year, and has been used extensively. There is an annual budget for the purchase of software - this year it is £300 - but if a particular need is perceived, it may be possible to augment this, as was the case in our purchase of the 15 *Télé-Textes* CD-ROMs.

#### **Positive and negative experiences in using CALL**

The Language Co-ordinators meet regularly to discuss all aspects of language teaching, and a number of points have been raised concerning CALL in our discussions.

1) We still find difficulties in persuading students to accept working on CALL as mainstream language work. Although most students are happy and willing to work on computers, they still perceive language classes as 'direct contact with the teacher' classes and tend to be somewhat resistant to other teaching strategies. In particular, the idea that they should go and work through the material on their own is difficult. The experience has been, for example, that at beginners' level they are reasonably happy to take a supervised group session where one of the class contact hours is a CALL hour. This can be a lot of fun, particularly as they start interacting with each other, and checking if they are both failing to solve the same example! The question remains whether this is good use of staff time. The situation is rather different for advanced students (see 4 below).

2) CALL is invaluable for aspects of differentiated learning at beginners' level, where the able students can move very quickly through the basic work and progress to more difficult tasks, while the weaker students find they can, without the rest of the group as an audience, work more slowly and yet still satisfy themselves as to their individual progress.

3) Much valuable use has been made of the TELL *Translit-TIGER Authoring Shell*, which has proved particularly useful for post-beginners groups. Students of German, for example, are directed to material which staff have entered in the program, which may constitute their set work for the week, and which will be monitored and returned in a separate contact hour. Staff are particularly enthusiastic about this procedure because they can use material which they may already have established as useful to the students, and which they are now presenting in a modified fashion. Updating of the range of material can be easily effected with current press articles. Students are entirely happy to accept the self-access philosophy here. The machines are available and the work can be done at

your own chosen time: the wide availability of workstations within the college, indicated above, is particularly important here as, for example, the Library is open till 9 pm, allowing for extended use of network facilities.

4) Staff are generally enthusiastic about introducing CALL materials into their teaching. The chief drawback is the time factor: time needed to acquaint oneself with the programs available and evaluate them; time needed for setting up one's own materials on the authoring program. The idea of student resistance to self access mentioned in 1, is partly the result of preconditioning (few if any have used computers in language learning before), and partly the result of staff being able to make less use of CALL than they would like, because of the limited time available to adapt their teaching.

Much progress has been made in the last year, and there is certainly sufficient enthusiasm among staff and students to foresee increasing use of CALL materials and facilities at QMW. There are clearly some difficulties - and funding for staff, materials and staff retraining is not the least of these. The development of the TELL Consortium programs has been particularly welcome, and, as more such materials become available, we are optimistic that further progress will be made.

*Pauline Small*  
Language Co-ordinator for Italian  
Queen Mary & Westfield College

## Case Study: University of Nottingham

In late 1993 in the French Department at the University of Nottingham, we asked ourselves a very significant and potentially dangerous question - would CAL be a more effective way of teaching certain types of modules than traditional tutorials/seminars? This question was asked at the time when the University was beginning to modularise its courses, and opportunities for testing new approaches to teaching were available. It seemed a good idea to experiment, and in 1994 funds were

made available to pay for the programming of material prepared in the Department. During 1995 eight programs were installed on the University's network. Logistically the benefits were obvious - access night and day, every day, across the whole campus, allowing students to spend as long as they liked on the programs and to visit them as often as they liked. The major concern was whether they would be beneficial pedagogically and academically. In seminars/tutorials it happens all too often that the tutor or particular students dominate the discussion, with the rest of the group remaining in suspended inanimation, waiting for the class to end, contributing nothing and learning nothing. The programs would allow full and independent participation by each student, without fear of interruption or ridicule from anyone else.

The programs are related to two linguistics modules taught to first-year students (compulsory for single honours, optional for joint and other combinations, but usually taken by about 80 students at a time). The modules are entitled: *The Status of the French Language* (with a sociolinguistic bias) and *Words and Sounds of Contemporary French*.

The four programs associated with the first module deal with register recognition. The first, called *Low Register French*, introduces students to the concept of slang and asks them in the first instance to write down ten French slang words that they already know. This is followed by questions such as: who uses slang? (Paying special consideration to age, sex and class); in what circumstances is slang used? What areas of life attract slang? Then a passage from *Zazie dans le Métro* is displayed, and students are invited to click on low register features (phonological, lexical and syntactical) and comment on them. Help and correction are supplied at each click. The second program, called *The Language of Poetry*, illustrates high register, literary French, particularly the language of poetry. Apollinaire's *La Jolie Rousse* is the point of departure for this program, which begins with an examination of the role of punctuation in literature - the poem is punctuation-less, and the students' first task is to punctuate the first half of the poem. A brief exposé on various poetic features follows, describing firstly different types of rhyme; the students' next task is to identify the types of rhyme used in

the poem; then there is a discussion of imagery, personification, apostrophe and oxymorons, finishing with an examination of versification, as exhibited in the poem. Students are being constantly asked to identify these various features from the poem, and help is on hand if required. The third program, entitled *Elements of Clause Structure*, elicits information on and provides practice in identifying elements of clause structure - students are asked to list characteristics of a verb (tenses, persons, moods, etc.), subject, complement and adjunct, and then analyse syntactically a passage of journalistic French using this information. The fourth program, with the unsnappy title *Groups, Clause and Sentence Types and Sentence Structure*, does exactly what its name suggests: it takes students through an analysis of the components and permutations associated with these units of language. It uses another example of literary French, this time extracted from Malraux's *La Condition Humaine*, as a basis for the students' own practice.

For the second module, *Words and Sounds of Contemporary French*, programs illustrating aspects of morphemic analysis, lexicology and phonetic transcription are available. The first, called *Morphemes*, involves discovering the various types of morphemes that exist in French (independent words, non-independent roots, derivatives, inflexions), grappling with the problems of suppletion, articles, etc., and eventually producing a piece of coursework (unfortunately to be marked manually), discussing and grouping together the morphemes encountered in fifty words of continuous French of the individual student's own choosing. From morphemes to lexemes, the second program, called *Lexical Items*, begins with a little game, whereby the students are challenged to drag a series of words into their grammatical baskets (noun, verb, adverb, adjective, preposition, conjunction). Having made the point that words belong to different syntactical categories, the program moves on to examining the properties and behaviour of words, i.e. lexical items, collocation, clusters, lexical sets, lexis, the lexicon. At each stage, students are given exercises to perform. Program number three, *Neologisms*, sets out sixteen technical terms describing the techniques of word formation (acronym, analogy, anglicism, back

formation, composition, etc.) and their definitions in random order; the students' first task is to match the term and the definition. The second task is to assign the appropriate term to a list of neologisms, explaining the processes involved in their formation. Help and correction are as usual provided throughout. The final program for this module, called *Phonetics*, needs to be closely linked with the lecture course on phonetics. Students are provided with a phonetic keyboard and asked to transcribe a passage from standard orthography into phonetic script and then perform the converse. All the time prompts are available for help as required.

There is no doubt that logistically the programs are an invaluable aid to the students. It is also clear, after two years of running the programs, that they have proved their worth pedagogically and academically as well. Because much of the material in these programs was previously taught through seminars (many times over because of the high numbers of takers) and had been adapted to access on computer, direct comparison of the old and new methods is possible. Students' comprehension of the concepts fundamental to linguistics has improved markedly, as has performance in coursework relating to the modules. Having the time, the availability of the programs for regular consultation, the possibility of self-testing and then receiving immediate feedback and answers to questions through the help facility, students can now be confident that they have understood and assimilated linguistic concepts that not infrequently foxed their predecessors, who rarely made the effort, because it was a substantial effort, to clarify their uncertainties.

*Dr Malcolm Offord*  
*Department of French*

*\* Footnote: the programs are written in Authorware and to run require at least a 486 PC with 8MB RAM and screen resolution of 800 x 600 and 256 colours. The programs can be networked.*

*\* Editor's Note: Please direct any enquiries about the software mentioned in the above article to the University of Nottingham, and not to CTICML.*

# Software Reviews. . . . .

## GapKit 2.0 for Windows

*Authors: Marco Bruzzone & Graham Davies*

*Supplier: Camsoft UK Ltd, 10 Wheatfield Close,  
Maidenhead, Berks Tel/Fax: (0)1628 825206*

*System requirement: MPC, Windows 3.1 or higher  
with a minimum 3MB hard disk space.*

*Price: £75.00 10-user licence (discounts available  
for users of GapKit 1.0 and Wida's Gapmaster)*

### General Description

This is an updated version of *GapKit 1.0*. As a Windows version it is much more user friendly, and incorporates multimedia features for the first time. For those new to *GapKit* this is essentially an authoring program providing teachers with the possibility of writing their own gap-filling exercises for students to exploit. Within the teacher's program features include the possibility of attaching textual hints, sound and picture files to individual gaps in a very simple and straightforward manner.

Any learners familiar with using a mouse should find this program simple to use. They simply have to point at the gap, click on it, and are provided with visual clues as to what features are attached e.g. a sound file or a picture). When they enter their attempted answer using the keyboard, characters which match those required are shown with spaces to indicate the missing ones and therefore the shape of the correct answer. A textual hint might also become available after the first (incorrect) attempt, or might be available from the start, a choice which is made by the teacher-author. Alternatively, a list of choices may be available, making the program exploitable for multiple choice type exercises.

Teacher-authors will find this a very easy program to exploit. They will require reasonable IT literacy skills in terms of familiarity with Windows environments and file management, but do not need to be IT experts. The teacher-author can author materials for any level and any age of learner, from primary to HE. Pedagogically this program is only as good as the content provided for it by its teacher-author users. At first sight it

appears to be limited, as it only works on the principle of gap-filling. However, with a little imagination (as is shown in the demonstration exercises supplied) gap-filling can be cloze exercise, multiple choice, grammar grids, sentence completion, vocabulary extension and, through the multimedia aspect, listening comprehension and dictation. A gap is not necessarily a single word, but can be an entire phrase or sentence, allowing the program to be used for whole text dictation, completion of one side of a dialogue etc. The flexibility of an authoring program means that students could be given access to the Teacher program to write exercises for each other (e.g. with instructions to incorporate certain sound/picture files).

One surprising aspect of *GapKit 2.0* is the lack of a scoring system which, in other comparable programs is often found to be motivational. However, feedback to the student is provided in a number of other ways. The pattern of characters becomes available after the first (incorrect) attempt, the **Reveal** function becomes available after 3 incorrect attempts and there is a feedback message to the user after each attempt. Additionally, once an exercise is completed, the program asks the user to complete again those gaps which s/he had struggled with originally.

There are a number of choices which teacher-authors need to make when creating an exercise. In the Gap dialog box there are options, such as specifying criteria like correct capitalisation (particularly important for German nouns), correct pronunciation and whether 'Choices' should be enabled. If the Choices option is checked, the end user can choose from a list of answers which might belong to other gaps in the same exercise. If the Distractors box is also checked, then that choice is limited to a list of words the author provides for that gap alone. When the dialog box is expanded to the additional options of adding sound/picture files and/or a hint line there is the choice of the hint being provided from the start or only after an incorrect attempt.

With regard to sound files, the teacher-author

needs to consider whether they are being used to provide an additional hint in a traditional text-based gapfill or to achieve the objectives of listening comprehension or dictation. Additionally, just because the feature is there does not mean that it has to be used for each exercise or for each gap.

Pedagogically this range of choices challenges teacher-authors to make decisions relating to their objectives in writing exercises and the levels of their students. But these choices also enable teacher-authors to adapt the same material to different levels with a minimum of effort.

### Technical considerations

There is always a range of technical considerations to be taken into account when using multimedia packages.

One technical area which was new to these reviewers was that of considering how to capture relevant sound files. The manual only briefly suggests how this may be done, and some more information would be welcome to most people, particularly regarding converting material on audio cassettes into a digital .WAV format.

We recorded our own voices, recorded from audio tapes playing aloud close to the computer's microphone (hoping not to pick up too much ambient sound) and produced surprisingly high quality results. We also found it easy to edit a dialogue into smaller sound bites using the Windows Sound Recorder. We connected an audio cassette player to the line-in socket at the back of the computer without any noticeable improvement in sound quality. Finally, we downloaded some of the comparatively rare .WAV format sound files found on the Internet.

For pictures, *GapKit 2.0* accepts files in .BMP, .DIB or .WMF format which means that teacher-authors can use clipart files supplied with applications such as Windows, Word or alternatively, graphics packages. Once the sound/picture file exists and has been transferred into the relevant directory, attaching it to *GapKit 2.0* exercises is extremely straightforward.

### Documentation

The accompanying manual is almost too detailed and provides explanations of standard Windows

functions in addition to functions of *GapKit 2.0*. Most of the relevant information is also available through the on-line Help. The manual is also extremely useful in providing suggestions for types of exercise and exploitation methods, as well as tips on layout, use of colour etc.

To suit a range of users, who may not have much experience in the authoring field, we feel there should be more technical advice in the manual or in Help on the multimedia aspects, including suggestions about editing sound files.

### Strengths and weaknesses

The major strength of the program, as we have seen, is its ease of use - ideal for busy teachers! With imagination it can be used to meet a range of teaching and learning objectives, with the one omission of a scoring system. It provides easy access to multimedia authoring and additionally offers easy conversion of exercises authored in either *GapKit 1.0* or Wida's *Gapmaster* into a more flexible and user-friendly environment. It is, however, limited by only working for gap-filling, in spite of the range of exercise types that can be written in this medium.

Good features include text formatting availability (fonts, bold, italic, colours etc.) for the author and end users, particularly attractive to users with visual impairments. While the Windows environment and toolbar make navigation simple for both author and end user, there are a few features which we felt were less user friendly than they might be. The two arrows on the Expand button are not particularly self-explanatory, and the Help index concerned with creating new exercises does not include entries on attaching sound and pictures.

For the end user, it would be preferable to see the pattern of the gap before the first attempt. It is not clear, for example, whether the gap is a single word or an entire sentence. The first attempt is therefore likely to be a bit hit and miss, especially in the case of phrases or whole sentences. The subsequent feedback is to provide an indication of numbers of characters missing, but without showing them as separate words. The feedback message which specifies that the answer should fit the pattern can therefore be irritating. One other limitation is that there is no facility for customising feedback mes-

sages or instructions, for instance, to enable use of the target language.

### Conclusion

*GapKit 2.0* is easy to install and use, provides an opportunity for busy teachers to create attractive and motivational exercises very quickly and simply. The addition of multimedia to traditional gap-filling/text reconstruction programs adds to the motivational aspect as well as vastly expanding their functionality and is a welcome addition to the range of authoring tools currently available on the market.

*Andy Hagyard & Jocelyn Wyburd*  
*University of Lincolnshire & Humberside*

## Russian Vocabulary Tester

*Author & Supplier: Andrew Quilley, Quaker House,  
7 University Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1GX Tel/Fax:  
01232 249293; Email: qhbelfst@nildram.co.uk*  
*System Requirements: IBM PC or compatible  
computers with Windows 3.1*  
*Price: £25.00, Network licences available on request*

The RVT is designed for learners of Russian at all levels and comes both with an extensive built-in vocabulary and the facility to edit and expand the vocabulary.

It is easy to install and use, even for the present reviewer, who is for most of the time a Macintosh user. It looks somewhat like a word-processor, so should be readily accessible to most first-time users.

I was provided with a demo disk which allowed a limited repertoire of facilities. Some of the vocabulary items (which included whole phrases) on which I was tested seemed surprising, e.g., 'raccoon' and 'like water off a duck's back', but the program was very tolerant of approximate answers and hence quite good from that point of view (four Russian and six English forms per entry are allowed, plus the built-in tolerances). I regretted the tolerance regarding apostrophes, but one wonders sometimes whether that is not a lost battle. A revision facility is present, the Russian words are stressed, and there is guidance on grammar. The screen was clear and uncluttered. It did take some working out just how to exit from the program, but part of this must be a consequence of my unfamiliarity with the certainly

less friendly and intuitive Windows interface. The help file, which is readily available, renders it very helpful for even newcomers to computers and its potential use for Russian learners, given plenty of vocabulary files and the facility for the teacher to develop his/her own materials (as usual, this will take a certain amount of concentrated work), is considerable. It was unclear whether the software would come with a hard-copy manual. I think that would be very useful.

On the whole, a well-priced piece of software which will be of great use to students of Russian, given the crucial nature of vocabulary accumulation in the early stages of learning that language.

*Ian Press*  
*University of St Andrews*

### Recent software and book donations to CTI Modern Languages

*An Introduction to creating CAL courseware with Microsoft Excel 5 (LoCAL)*

*Auto French CD-ROM (Baker Heath Associates Ltd)*

*Breakthrough French CD-ROM (Macmillan)*

*Business Territory CD-ROM (Lingonet)*

*Collins Series 100 Multilingual Dictionary CD-ROM (Harper Collins)*

*Dynamic English 3 CD-ROM (DynEd)*

*Eindrücke-Einblicke (Chris Hall, University of Leicester)*

*Elsevier Dictionaries CD-ROM DEMO (Elsevier)*

*Fun with Texts Windows version BETA (Camssoft UK)*

*Helpdisk! (Clifton Press)*

*Issues in English CD-ROM (Protea Textware)*

*Let's Do Business CD-ROM (Abacus Communications)*

*Multiconcord (CFL Software Development)*

*QTKanji & KanjiQuiz (Chubu University)*

*Rosetta Stone update DEMO (ABG Software)*

*SIMA Reports CD-ROM (SIMA)*

*The French Experience CD-ROM (BBC)*

*WIDA Authoring Suite update (WIDA)*

**BOOK:** *Humans, Computers and Wizards: Analysing human (simulated) computer interaction (Routledge)*

*Some of the above may still be available for review.  
Contact Jo Porritt Email: j.v.porritt@selc.hull.ac.uk*

# FDTL News . . . . .

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The Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning aims to develop and disseminate good practice in teaching and learning throughout the higher education sector, as identified in the quality assessment programme. The Phase Two Projects share funding of £4.3 million over the next three years. A list of the 19 successful projects may be found at:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/initiat/current/fdtl/ph2proj.htm>

## **System for Interactive Phonetic Training and Assessment (SIPhTrA)**

An innovative method known as 'Analytic Listening' (AL) has been developed at UCL as a tool for auditory training in phonetics. Its analytic approach formalises a standard for good practice in this area. It is a flexible tool which can be adapted to class teaching or self-paced study, and which enables well-defined objective assessment of student attainment. It builds student confidence in an area often considered difficult. A major advance is now in progress as a result of the combination of AL with multimedia techniques which will support the incorporation of phonetic symbols and graphical displays.

The SIPhTrA project is funded for three years and is designed to ensure wide dissemination of the technique through the collaboration of other HEIs.

Partners will use and evaluate the AL technique and contribute to its development and planned extension to other areas of phonetics. Both delivery system and materials will be made freely available over the Internet and in the form of CD-ROMs and audio tapes. A series of workshops, roadshows and conference presentations will provide opportunities for training in the technique, hands-on experience and formative evaluation.

*John Maidment  
Department of Phonetics & Linguistics  
University College London  
Email: johnm@phonetics.ucl.ac.uk*

## **FDTL: The Period of Residence Abroad in Modern Language Degrees**

The Oxford Brookes consortium of five universities will be dealing with those aspects of the year abroad identified by HEFCE as revealing weakness in a significant number of institutions, notably aims and objectives, curriculum design and integration, and student support and guidance. The team will be developing models of good practice in collaboration with staff, and, more importantly, students in a group of representative institutions, and producing and testing materials based on their practical experience. The project will be making considerable use of IT primarily (a) as a means of involving other institutions as the project develops via a website and discussion group and (b) as a means of disseminating materials to all modern language departments via CD-ROM and an interactive Web frontend to the project's databases.

*Mark Bannister (Project Director)  
School of Languages  
Oxford Brookes University  
Email: mark@sol.brookes.ac.uk*

Unless indicated otherwise, full details of all the packages referred to in this Newsletter are available from Jo Porritt, at the CTICML address on the front cover.

# Forthcoming Events . . . . .

**6-8 November 1997, London, UK:** London Language Show

*Information:* Brintex, 32 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 2SS, UK, Tel: +44 (0)171 973 6401

**15 November 1997, London, UK:** ALL French Day

*Information:* ALL, 150 Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3HN, UK, Tel: +44 (0)1788 546443, Fax: +44 (0)1788 544149

**20-21 November 1997, Antwerp, Belgium:**

Language Testing and Human Resource Management

*Information:* Kathleen Heireman, University of Antwerp, Didascalie, Universiteitsplein 1, 2610 Wilrijk, Belgium, Tel: + 32 3 820 29 67, Fax: + 32 3 820 29 86, Email: heireman@uia.ua.ac.be

**28 November 1997, Leicester, UK:** HEVOCAL: Languages, Graduates, and Transferable Skills

*Information:* CILT, 20 Bedfordbury, Covent Garden, London WC2N 4LB, UK, Tel: +44 (0)171 379 5101, Fax: +44 (0)171 379 5082, Email: hevocal@cilt.org.uk

**13 December 1997, London, UK:** HEVOCAL:

Languages, Graduates, and Transferable Skills

*Information:* CILT, (as above)

**6-7 January 1998, Cambridge, UK:** 2nd CILT Research Forum: Information Technology: the pedagogical implications for language teaching and learning

*Information:* Alison Cutler, CILT Conferences, (address as above)

**7-8 January 1998, Cambridge, UK:**

LEVERAGE Conference: Education in the communication age

*Information:* Leverage Information Unit, Head of Information Services, CILT, 20 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4LB, Tel: +44 (0)171 379 5101 x228,

Email: leverage@cilt.org.uk,

<http://www.dit.upm.es/~leverage>

**14-17 January 1998, London, UK:** BETT 98

*Information:* EMAP Education, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London, NW1 7QZ, UK, Tel: +44 (0)171 388 2430, Fax: +44 (0)171 388 2578

**28 January 1998, Hull, UK:** CTICML CALL Workshop

*Information:* Jo Porritt, CTICML (address on front cover)

**28 January - 1 February 1998, Paris, France:**

Expolangues

*Information:* Christine Frichet, Reed-OIP, 11 rue du

Colonel Pierre Avia, BP 571, 75726 Paris Cedex 15, France, Tel: +33 1 41 90 47 60, Fax: +33 1 41 90 47 69

**6-8 March 1998, Dublin, Ireland:** Languages for Specific Purposes & Academic Purposes - Integrating Theory & Practice

*Information:* Mary Ruane, Language Centre, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland, Tel: +353 1 706 8686, Fax: +353 1 706 1188,

Email: Language.Centre@ucd.ie

**3-5 April 1998, Brighton, UK:** Language World: The way ahead: language strategies for the millennium

*Information:* ALL, 150 Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3HN, UK,

Tel: +44 (0)1788 546443, Fax: +44 (0)1788 544149

**25-27 May 1998, Stockholm, Sweden:** ESCA Workshop on Speech Technology in Language Learning

*Information:* Workshop Secretariat, STiLL, KTH (Royal Institute of Technology), Fax: +46 8 790 7854, Email: still@speech.kth.se, <http://www.speech.kth.se/still/>

**13-17 July 1998, Melbourne, Australia:**

WORLD CALL Conference: CALL to Creativity

*Information:* June Gassin, Horwood Language Centre, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia, Email: June\_Gassin@muwayF.unimelb.edu.au

**10-12 September 1998, Leuven, Belgium:**

EUROCALL 98

*Information:* Claudine Van Volsem, EUROCALL 98, LINOVO/UPV, Celestijnenlaan 200 A, B-3001 Heverlee, Belgium, Tel: +32 16 32 77 31, Fax: +32 16 32 79 75, <http://www.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/eurocall98>,

Email: eurocall98@linov.kuleuven.ac.be

**17-19 September 1998, Italy:**

5th CercleS International Conference

*Information:* CercleS Secretariat, Centre for Modern Languages, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AA, UK, Tel/Fax: +44 1752 232249

**16-18 September 1999, Besançon, France:** EUROCALL 99

*Information:* Thierry Chanier, Laboratoire d'Informatique de Besançon, Université de Franche-Comté, France.

Tel: +33 3 81 58 84 70, Fax: +33 3 81 66 64 50,

Email: thierry.chanier@univ-fcomte.fr,

<http://lib.univ-fcomte.fr/RECHERCHE/P7/EUROCALL/EUROCALLE.html>