Vance Stevens

CALL-IS

The Computer-Assisted Language Learning Interest Section of

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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REVIEWS OF SELECTED TESOL 1987 SESSIONS ON COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Writing and Revising with Computers in ESL Composition

Marianne Phinney described a pilot project conducted at the University of Texas at El Paso in which university-level ESL students used word processors in a process-approach freshman composition class. In this project, the students' hand-written, in-class first drafts were compared to the final papers which were typed on word processors, and the results indicated that there was a significant increase in (1) the length of the papers, (2) the quality of the writing (as indicated by the percentage of error-free T-units), and (3) the students' attitudes toward writing in general and towards using word processors in particular. The presenter described the composition class and the way in which the students were introduced to the word processors.

Overall, the descriptions of the project and of the writing class were interesting and informative. Although there was nothing particularly innovative about the project, the presentation offered a good overview of using word processors for writing. The quality of the research was weakened by the absence of a control group, and it is likely many of the advantages that were attributed to the use of word processors could also be attributed to other factors. The presentation did, however, include other advantages to using word processors which are more difficult to quantify, such as the ease of revising and of reading the printed copy, and the usefulness of knowing how to use a word processor.

Review by **Katherine E. Muhlhausen**
Utah Technical College at Salt Lake

Communicative Approaches in Computer-Assisted Language Instruction

Jannie J. Both of the University of Stellenbosch read what was essentially a position paper on communicative approaches to CALI. Commencing with remarks on the deficiencies of the traditional language lab and the ways in which behavioristic methodologies had carried over into courseware development, the presenter echoed the conception of the computer as tutor, tool, tutee. He then discussed his five principles of communicative CALI encapsulated in the following statements:

(1) know what you are doing, (2) the whole is more than the sum of its parts, (3) process is as important as forms, (4) to learn it, do it, and (5) mistakes are not always mistakes. The presenter then gave as examples of communicative software "The Factory" and "The Pond" (Sunburst), but he also noted that with such software communication among students is often at the level of minimal utterances. The presenter then said that artificial intelligence "promised" improvements in communicative CALI that would make possible developments such as expert systems and software that takes into account individual learning styles. The presenter concluded that available software was "unacceptable" and that we were only "starting to scratch the surface" with communicative CALI.

Interactive Video in the Teaching of English

The advantages and disadvantages of interactive video were presented by Brian Hill of Brighton Polytechnic who also presented data from a related research project on interactive video. Hill noted that interactive video (1) stimulates, excites, and motivates, (2) provides opportunities to be creative, (3) broadens horizons and extends contacts, (4) leads to a variety of further activities, (5) responds to individual needs, (6) extends to other learning situations, and (7) appeals to a technologically sophisticated

generation of students. Correspondingly, some disadvantages of using video or computers alone were noted. Videos, for example, have an operation that intrudes on learning, constitute an ephemeral medium, and provide no feedback. Computers alone lack authenticity, tend more toward structuralism than communication, and can be frustrating. The presenter then discussed a long list of computer-interactive activities (comprising at least 18 items) which he had implemented with the video "Bid for Power." In an experiment comparing IV with video alone, the presenter found that students enjoyed, and in fact preferred, using IV. They also learned most from IV. He presented data to show that IV facilitated retention of vocabulary; furthermore, when prompted by IV, 97% of the students spoke aloud; when prompted by video alone, only 20% spoke. Finally, pronunciation errors were shown to decrease on three words when students used IV. One question asked was how much of the curriculum was devoted to IV. The presenter indicated that lack of money prevented the whole curriculum from being IV. He estimated that one-third of the curriculum was comprised of IV instruction.

CALL-IS NEWSLETTER

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The **CALL-IS Newsletter** welcomes submission of articles concerning the application of computers to second/foreign language learning and testing. Information concerning items of general interest to the membership of the CALL Interest Section of TESOL are also solicited. Send articles and information to:

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SOFTWARE EVALUATION WORKSHOP

In this workshop, the presenters began with brief remarks on their experiences with and philosophies of software evaluation. Phil Hubbard of Stanford University pointed out that the reviewer's choice of language learning methodology must be a factor in any evaluation. Presenting a set of criteria derived from a much longer article, he pointed out that these were in effect design as well as evaluation criteria. Judith Matsumoto of Atlantic Community College raised a number of questions related to the student interface (e.g., student characteristics, expected learning, and instructional setting), and to criteria (e.g., degree of control, interest, interactivity, language level, visuals, directions, and reinforcement - which should be delivered "without condescension"). Norm Johnson of the **C.A.L.L. Digest** then presented the heuristic he uses when doing evaluations for the **Digest.** This includes a description not only of the software, but also of the name of the publisher, the hardware requirements, and the documentation available. Finally, Laura Perez of the University of Arizona suggested several considerations in software evaluation, including the following: potential adaptability, accommodation to student levels, amount of student involvement allowed, pacing and timing, loading time required, appearance of screen format, amount of teacher monitoring necessary, and considerations of editability and documentation. Other questions asked whether motivational devices are included, whether backups are possible, and whether the time and money spent are justified.

Participants then broke into groups, each headed by one of the presenters, and examined particular items of software according to evaluation considerations suggested by a specific presenter.

USE OF THE COMPUTER NOW AND IN THE FUTURE FOR ESL

Vance Stevens of Sultan Qaboos University and Emily Thrush of Georgia Tech began the session by assessing the needs of the audience and responding to their concerns. Discussion settled on the soft-

ware available in both commercial and public domains. Also taken up was the manner in which software originally created for use with native speakers could be adapted for use in ESL settings.

Reviews by **Vance Stevens**
Sultan Qaboos University

CD-ROM: INTRODUCTION & DEMONSTRATION OF ESL APPLICATIONS

Veryl Woodbury and Michael Akagi, both of Brigham Young University and Innovative Courseware Design, discussed the potential of the CD-ROM to provide a lower cost and more versatile alternative to paper and video disc storage of resource materials. They pointed out that it could provide teachers rapid access to vast quantities of reading material with an extensive indexing by content, length, difficulty, linguistic features, and so on. Also, the addition of sound and graphics to such a data base, either on the same disc or on special purpose discs, could add a whole new dimension to computer programming. They substantiated their optimism over the likely success of CD-ROM by pointing to the recent explosive track record of audio CDs, the existence of Microsoft-inspired High Sierra standard format, and plans for a home market CD-Interactive that should broaden the consumer base and strengthen the demand for educational CD materials. Furthermore, publishers are already applying a lesson learned in the video disc market. They are clamoring for material to feed these machines. Accordingly, Woodbury and Akagi invited people interested in producing materials to contact them. Turning to their own program, Versatext, they pointed out that it is designed to provide a means for using textual data either from a CD-ROM data base or directly from teacher input. The editor is then used to create a reading program, the complete features of which are still under development. Their talk and brief demonstration was favorably received by the audience which consisted of many who were unfamiliar with the concept of CD-ROM.

VISI-PITCH

Presenters from Kay Elemetrics demonstrated the Babel and the Visi-Pitch systems. The Babel System is a Spanish language tool still under development. The essence of the program is to provide a visual model of the lips and tongue in action combined with synthetic speech. Both are accessed by typing in text. The animation and sounds are rule-driven. For ESL use, only the rules would need to be changed. The audience was cautious in its reception of the program. They were not so with Visi-Pitch. The Visi-Pitch is a hardware/software package used primarily by speech pathologists and only recently by ESL instructors. The program gives a visual line trace of the supra-segmental features of speech, namely stress and tone. It was an impressive display because the features of pronunciation were clearly evident on the screen both in presence/absence and in intensity. Students are able to practice and compare their patterns with a target pattern from either the teacher or a tape. Several in the audience made mention of their positive experiences with the package. It was also noted that several texts for ESL using Visi-Pitch were already in preparation. It should be noted, however, that when hardware other than Apple or IBM is involved, the cost of the program is rather high.

THE CHALLENGE OF HYPERTEXT

Hypertext is not yet a familiar term as evidenced by the small audience attending the session. The presentation by Mark Stein of Robert Morris College was neither aimed at defining nor exploring existing programs. In fact, the model which served to context the discussion of hypertext was the simple word processor with search capabilities. Hypertext electronically cross-references text. The key point is that the word processor can dip the student in and out of text in a new fashion which leads to a new type of relationship between writer, reader and text. Several questions relevant to materials design follow from this. For example, what do texts look like when they can be jumped, bridged, merged and searched, not as parts of a whole, but as immediately linked moments invisibly determined by pathways inherent in the query features of the software? It was suggested that hypertext will have impact on reading strategies, both as they are taught to, and experienced by, readers. Since reading may become, simply put, not a linear recreation of the authorial experience, but a reader-specific event, it will also have an impact on one's view of the content, the syllabus. Perhaps the teacher's role will shift more toward being a purveyor of strategy rather than a guide through the curriculum. Another major consideration is the nature of comprehension questions and their relation to the text. It was suggested that the traditional reading comprehension questions of the

In this first effort by Research Design Associates, the most interesting elements include (1) the concept of having an inexpensive interface that drives the tape in synchronization with the activity on the screen, and (2) the publisher's desire to enlist expert ESL teachers in preparing additional scenarios, scripts, and tests. This prototype lesson is rather pedestrian, and the accompanying recording is marred with intonation problems and poorly selected vocabulary (in addition to the inclusion of a strong regional dialect); however, the package does clearly show what can be done easily and inexpensively with the material provided.

Despite these shortcomings, I would recommend the program to teachers using Apples because (1) it would be quite useful when used in conjunction with appropriate activities, (2) the quality of the tape could be improved by teachers, and (3) it would be easier to design better lessons and submit these to the publisher after determining the good and bad features of the program as a result of student use. (The publisher would respond to this kind of input.) I think the lessons themselves would have considerable appeal to students with listening comprehension problems and to beginners of all ages and backgrounds. Finally, as the lessons are extremely easy to use, they could also serve as a useful introduction to CALL.

Review by **Macey B. Taylor**
Tucson, Arizona

BOOK REVIEW

Working with Computers: Computer Orientation for Foreign Students by Michael Barlow. Stanford CA: Athelstan.

Although I do not know all there is to know about computers, I know much more about them than I can suffer to read in the average introduction-type text; it was, therefore, not without misgivings that I undertook to read Michael Barlow's book explaining computers to foreign students. Once into it, my misgivings disappeared, and I found that I was enjoying the book because *Working with Computers* is comprehensive, informative (I learned several things I had not previously known), clearly organized, and agreeably presented in a relaxed, conversational tone that is in no way patronizing.

The book is organized around two major sections: computers and computer tools in general, and uses of computers to accomplish specific academic tasks (e.g., conducting library searches and writing research papers). In the former category are chapters dealing separately with getting around in mainframes and in microcomputers. There are also chapters about word processing, computer-based communications, databases, and spreadsheets. These issues are dealt with first in overview, but each case is illustrated with specific examples of the way in which sessions on computers might be conducted.

While the chapters on the "basics" of computers spare us the detailed discussion of computer anatomy so often found in other introductory tomes, the chapters on academic uses of computers do resort to discussing "basics" more appropriate to the foreign student audience. In these chapters, discussion of the way in which computers can be used in library searches is preceded by an overview of resources available in a typical college library and a description of the way in which searches are organized. Accordingly, the section on using computers to write research papers (data base manipulation and idea processing, in addition to word processing and formatting programs) is preceded by sections on taking and organizing notes, developing a thesis, and avoiding plagiarism; other sections cover topics quite pertinent to foreigners facing the daunting task of writing research papers in American or British institutions of higher learning.

In dealing with note taking and similar topics, the author is obviously directing his book at strangers to the American and British academic systems; furthermore, on page 206, the cautionary note that encyclopedias "simplify ... too much for work at the graduate level" provides the only overt clue in the book to the author's actual intended audience; however, it is obvious to this reviewer that, despite the author's numerous attempts to redefine and rephrase, this book, unavoidably, is going to be comprehensible only to foreign students possessing very advanced levels both in English and in study skills. Thus is raised the question: For whom is this book actually intended? It is clear from the publisher's accompanying literature that this book stems from the author's having taught courses on this subject. It is unfortunate that the inherent bias, and one fixed firmly in the book title, is toward foreign students because this book would appeal strongly to at least three other audiences. One audience would be native-speaking students about to leave high school or to begin university careers; they would benefit greatly from the knowledge imparted by the author and from the clarity and simplicity of his presentation. Another audience, and one which this book might actually reach, would be graduate students in ESL programs who might need to advise international students about using computers. For such students, the book not only has all the essentials they need to become computer literate them-

selves, but it models a manner of presentation that could be emulated in effectively imparting these skills to international students not able to read the book themselves. Still a third group who would benefit greatly from reading and having a copy of this book on their shelves are all the practicing ESL teachers who have always meant to find out about computers but who somehow have never yet managed to find the time to do so. For such teachers who are in need of information concerning the potential of computers tools (e.g., word processors, database managers, spreadsheets, electronic mail and bulletin boards, and library search programs), this book would prove an excellent introduction. I think that all of these secondary audiences would appreciate the explanations that start from square one as much as they would the walk-throughs of sample sessions the author asks readers to imagine being performed on a computer.

Coming to grips with the scope of a book on this subject must have been no easy task; nevertheless, Michael Barlow has managed to include enough information on the many topics covered for the book to be quite practical. He has not neglected to give the overview. For international students there are whole units on the study skills that are needed before work with computers can even be considered. I think this would be an excellent book for graduate international students, American or British high school and undergraduate students, and all their respective teachers. Ironically, I think the book is beyond the grasp of the average international student, but only in terms of the language used, not the concepts dealt with. If I had students I felt (1) could read and understand this material, and (2) had access to some of the software mentioned, I would not hesitate to recommend this book to them.

Review by **Vance Stevens**
Sultan Qaboos University

SURVEY PROJECT OF ESL SOFTWARE

Bruce Carrick
Portland State University

A report published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory surveys fifty commercially available ESL software programs. The project was designed to highlight those programs produced after 1983 with a language focus which ESL teachers could use to stimulate student interaction. A separate report on word processing software was published in a quarterly report by the Lab in February of 1987.

Copies of the report can be obtained at cost from the duplicating services of the Technology Program / Northwest Regional Educational Lab / One Main Place / Portland, OR 97203.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

VESL CAI

Carolyn Keith
(Maricopa Technical Community College)
Peter Lafford
(Mesa Community College)

The Arizona Department of Education's Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) Curriculum Project developed Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) for Limited English Proficient (LEP) learners in high-demand occupational areas. Building on Activity Manuals and flash cards, created in earlier phases of the Project, VESL staff used the Apple (tm) SuperPILOT authoring language and Apple IIe/IIc microcomputers to develop software that assists the limited English proficient learner with the technical and sub-technical language of certain vocational areas. During an eight-month period, VESL staff completed CAI modules in Auto Mechanics and Food Services. A third module, Nursing Assistant, was also begun.

The software was designed to provide the LEP learner with supplemental instruction that would facilitate the student's progress in required vocational classes. The focus of the software is vocabulary comprehension, taught by means of contextual definitions, exercises and tests. Technical theory, taught in the vocational class, is not stressed in the CAI lessons.

A microcomputer survey of vocational institutions nationwide showed that 44 of the 73 responding institutions have Apple IIe or IIc microcomputers. Forty institutions indicated that at least some of their microcomputers had two disk drives. The survey confirmed that Apple dominated the educational marketplace. The Apple IIe/IIc was, thus, chosen for software development.

One of the Project's primary goals was to produce effective vocabulary reinforcement lessons that also retain a student's interest for a long period of time. Because of the way SuperPILOT handles program storage, it was necessary to have two disk drives to accomplish software development.

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