



LEARNING
TECHNOLOGIES
SIG

CALL Review



WINTER 2010 - 11

CONTENTS

Front matter

- 2 Imprint and submission guidelines
- 3 Editorial - Maurice Claypole
- 4 From the Coordinator - Graham Stanley

Communication tools

- 5 Screen capture - Russell Stannard
- 8 Online teaching via Skype - Olga Chetverikova

Learning environments

- 11 Classroom dynamics of VLEs - Anna Turula

SIG Information

- 15 How to get involved in the Learning Technologies SIG

Series

- 16 The digital divide Part One - Kevin Westbrook

E-literacy

- 21 Academic skills in the digital age - Sonja Tack

Corpora

- 26 Corpus research in the language classroom - Andrew Prosser
- 32 The BYU-BNC corpus interface - Duncan Hunter

Reviews

- 35 Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning - Pete Sharma
- 38 Digital Asia: Language, technology and community - Michael Thomas
- 41 Rebooting the conference - Wayne Rimmer

CALL Review

CALL Review is the newsletter of the IATEFL Learning Technologies Special Interest Group and is published three times a year in spring, summer and winter. Publication is open to members and non-members.

Submission guidelines

Full-length articles should be no more than 2,000 words in length. Book reviews should generally range from 750 to 1,000 words. Shorter items (event announcements, feedback from readers, items of special interest, etc.) will also be considered for publication. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations.

Although every effort will be made to accept articles for publication, the editor reserves the right to refuse or edit submissions.

All contributions should be submitted by email attachment addressed to the editor. Submissions should be sent as Word documents in Windows (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text format (.rtf). Please use Arial or other standard font, 12 pt, single spacing, left-justified, without indentation. Graphics should be sent as separate files (.jpg, minimum resolution 300 dpi), with recommended insertion points indicated in the body of the text. Please ensure that the file names of any graphics enable them to be easily identified.

Please avoid excessive use of hyperlinks in the body of the text. Long web references should be shortened by using <http://bit.ly>, <http://tinyurl.com> or similar, but in many cases it is adequate to cite the home page URL. If possible, quote a DOI (digital object identifier). In all cases, please remember that whilst some people will read your contribution on screen others may print it out and read the hard copy.

The preferred style is the APA format (<http://apastyle.apa.org>). In addition to the author's full name, each submission should be accompanied by the author's current postal address (not for publication), a short biography (max. 50 words) and a recent passport-style photograph. This also applies to authors who have written for CALL Review before. If appropriate, please also include a short abstract to appear on the LTSIG website.

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is:

31 March 2011

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For details of how you can become involved in the work of the Learning Technologies Special Interest Group, see page 15.

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Editorial



ANY ATTEMPT TO crystallise this issue of CALL Review into a simple catch-phrase or overall descriptor would have to include two main features: breadth and depth. Breadth because this issue covers a wide spectrum of topics ranging from communicative tools such as Skype and Jing to virtual learning environments, academic skills and corpus research; depth because our contributors strive to go beyond the superficial and delve deep into their chosen subjects in order to provide added the benefit and practical insights for the reader.

AS EDITOR, I was in fact faced with a delightful dilemma when compiling this issue, since the number of quality contributions far exceeded the space normally allocated to a single issue. In the end, I simply could not bring myself to put any of these timely and original contributions on hold for the next issue, so readers will find this newsletter has been expanded to a bumper 44 pages.

THE MAIN BODY of this edition kicks off with a section on communication tools in which Russell Stannard shows how screen capture technology can be harnessed to provide simple and

effective feedback to students, highlighting one free resource in particular and detailing how he has personally used Jing to stimulate student interaction online. Also in this section, Olga Chetverikova gainsays the notion that nothing can beat face-to-face lessons by providing a highly practical guide to exploiting Skype for individualised online lessons.

IN THE FIRST of an intriguing three-part series entitled 'The digital divide', Kevin Westbrook examines the acceptance of technology in the ELT community as a whole and the extent to which learning technologies have or have not become integrated into mainstream use in language teaching - essential reading for all teachers interested in technology.

ONE ASPECT THAT is often over-looked by proponents of virtual learning environments (VLEs) at tertiary level is the effect of group dynamics on the learning outcome. Anna Turula addresses this very issue and reveals how a careful study of classroom dynamics within a virtual learning environment can significantly increase student participation. Meanwhile, Sonja Tack turns her attention to the fair use of digital images and in particular, the way students of English for academic purposes (EAP) can incorporate high-quality visual material into their language work without infringing copyright. Here, teachers, too, should note the implications of failing to include accurate citations in their presentations.

ANOTHER AREA OF study which has attracted the attention of publishers

and theorists over the years but remains an underused resource by the majority of language teachers is that of corpus research. Two contributions in this issue seek to redress this imbalance: Andrew Prosser illustrates how concordance software can be exploited by language teachers to promote autonomous learning and help students acquire greater competence, whilst Duncan Hunter focuses on the British National Corpus and reviews an alternative interface which provides teachers and learners with a range of additional functions not available through the standard BNC website.

IN OUR REVIEWS section, Pete Sharma takes stock of what is probably the most comprehensive handbook ever written on the use of modern technologies in second language learning, whilst this edition of CALL Review is rounded off by two reports on recent technology-oriented ELT events.

IN THE FIRST of these, Michael Thomas provides an insider's flashback to the 2010 International Wireless Ready Symposium in Nagoya and then Wayne Rimmer gives an insightful review of a unique three-day 'unconference' held at the British Council in Moscow.

MY THANKS GO to all who have contributed to making this issue of CALL Review such an interesting and varied collection of original and thought-provoking insights.

Maurice Claypole

Editor

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LTSIG



From the Coordinator

Dear friends and colleagues,

I'VE RECENTLY BEEN reading a new book by former *Wired* editor, Kevin Kelly (*What Technology Wants*, Viking, 2010) which claims that technology is a kind of autonomous life-form, with intrinsic goals toward which it is heading whether we like it or not. These goals, Kelly says, are like the tendencies of biological life, which adapts, specialises and then eventually becomes more sentient. Kelly argues that by listening to what technology wants, we can better prepare ourselves for the inevitable technologies to come, and take advantage of the increased options and opportunities it offers us.

IT MAKES A fascinating read, and has set me off wondering about what *language learning technology* wants. Judging by the number of proposals for the next annual IATEFL conference relating to m-learning, *language learning technology* wants us to learn *on-the-go*, wherever and whenever we feel like it. The LT SIG have responded to this by programming a large number of these proposals into our SIG day for the conference in Brighton, which I'm

happy to say should end up giving participants a good insight into the current state of play concerning hand-held language learning.

WE ARE ALSO finalising details for our PCE (Pre-Conference Event) on Interactive Whiteboards and language teaching and learning, and hope that many of you will join us for this too. Based on the success of the Harrogate 'unconference' PCE, we're looking forward to adding a similar element to the next one, and will be asking participants with experience of IWBs to come prepared for a 'show-and-tell' session. Apart from this, there will also be presentations covering a range of different uses of this classroom tool, all with the focus of how we can use it more interactively (i.e. moving away from the IWB's reputation as a tool that leads to more teacher-fronted classes).

IF YOU ARE planning on going, please take into account that the event is not taking place at the Brighton Centre (where the main IATEFL conference and exhibition is being held). We are, instead, very fortunate to be at the the University of Brighton's Falmer Campus, where we will have more

space and will therefore be able to hold a more flexible event, the details of which will be sent to all of you soon.

THE PCE LOCATION does require participants to take a bus or a train to get there, however, and those of you who have already registered should have received details of how to get there. To those of you who are still thinking about attending, but who have yet to register, please **do not wait** until the day to do so as you will not have time to register for the conference and then travel to the PCE location on the day of the event.

BEFORE THIS, WE are also planning to organise an online event for those of you who can't make it to Brighton in person, and would love to hear from members of the SIG if you have any suggestions for future events that could be organised.

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Screen capture

Four years on and the revolution keeps going

Russell Stannard reveals how a simple idea has evolved into a winning educational tool

IT'S NOT OFTEN you write an article that ends up being published in the national papers, gets you an appearance on TV, invitations to talk in about ten different countries and finally to be included in a government report! What's more, it makes a contribution to helping you to win four pretty substantial awards! But that is what happened when I wrote about the idea of using screen capture technology to provide feedback to students. My first ever articles on the subject (and I believe anywhere) were written in the IATEFL SIG in November 2006 and in the Modern English Teacher a few months before.

THE IDEA WAS simple and to me immediately obvious. Screen capture

software allows you the chance to record the screen of your computer as if you had a video camera pointing at it. It also records your voice. It is commonly used for computer training since someone can record themselves actually using a software programme and explain what they are doing and then make the subsequent video available rather than write out reams of notes. When I first saw screen capture I saw something else. I realised immediately that I could open a student's work onto the screen, turn on the screen capture software and record myself correcting the students work.

IN TRUTH THERE were several problems with this initial idea but it is interesting to see that four years



RUSSELL STANNARD

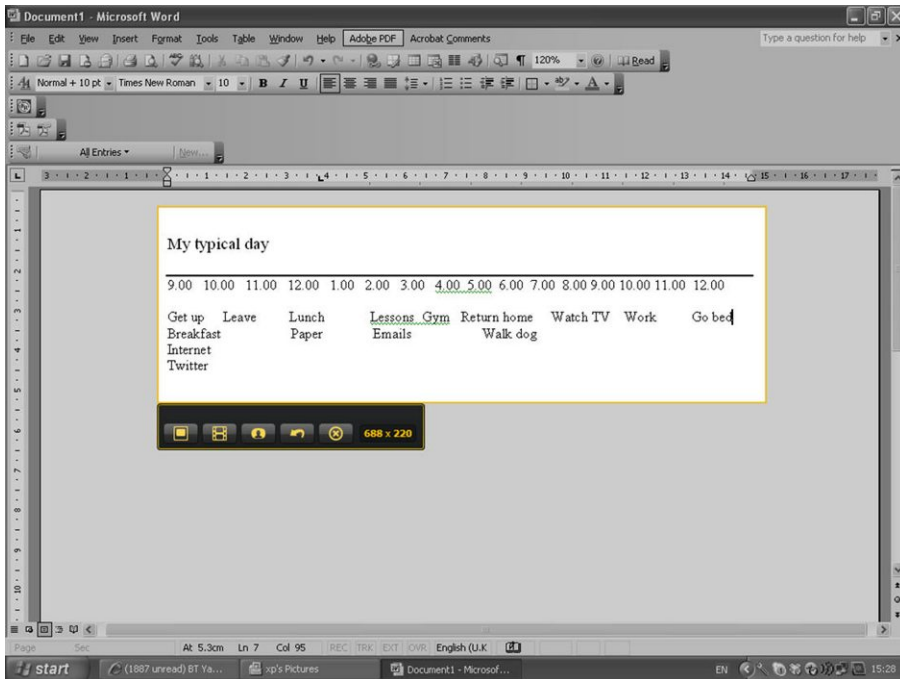
is a Principal Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick where he teaches an MA in ELT with ICT.

He is currently doing his PhD in feedback. He won the Times Higher "Outstanding Initiative in ICT 2008, TEFL net site of the year 2009 and the British council ELTons award for innovation 2010.

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later the development of the technology means they have nearly all been overcome. The biggest problem was that the video couldn't be sent until the videos were compressed, so there was a time delay between making the video and getting it to the student. A product called JING (which is free) has changed all that. Now you simply click on a button, the video is immediately uploaded onto the JING Server and JING immediately send you back the URL of where that video is residing and you simply send that to the student.

THE PUBLICITY, ESPECIALLY the subsequent articles in the Guardian,



Students can use JING to talk about their typical day

JING server and the URL is sent back to the student. The student then sends the URL to the teacher. The result is that we use technology to transform the types of activities that students can do for homework, using a simple tool that any student can learn to use in just five minutes. What is more amazing, it is FREE.

ONCE JING IS in the hands of your students, the number of possibilities is just amazing. They can show pictures of their family, friends, favourite places etc and talk about them at the same time. They can even play a video and screen capture that. So you could get them to commentate on a football match or a video about an interesting place they like. They simply turn down the sound and add their own commentary and then add it onto the JING server. In the summer I did a really simple idea in a one-to-one class. I simply got the student to draw a timeline of their life and add important dates to it and a few notes to help them. They practiced talking about the timeline with me and I asked them questions about the various dates they had noted. Then for homework I got them to open up their timeline onto the screen, turn on JING and record themselves talking about the dates and what happened. They uploaded the video and sent me the link, so that I could play it back and listen to them speaking.

I LOVE THIS idea because I have spent 25 years as a TEFL teacher

the Independent and the Times Higher meant that within just a few months of me working on the idea, it was completely out in the public domain and people were throwing ideas and criticisms at me from everywhere. Teachers immediately pointed out that just as you could use screen capture for feedback, you could use the same technology to add support to an assessment (for example you could make a video that went over the marking scheme or highlighted the key things to think about when setting a piece of course work).

MY OWN THOUGHTS began to move towards getting the students to use screen capture. Since JING is so easy we can use it for all sorts of speaking activities. For example, let's imagine that we get the students to describe their house. We do some work on vocabulary in the class, maybe look at useful structures and show some example YouTube videos of amazing


houses around the world. Perhaps we then get the students to draw their house and then work in pairs and describe them. For homework the students go home, switch on their computers, upload a picture of

We can use technology to transform the types of activities that students can do for homework

their house or room onto their computer and then turn on the screen capture software. They can then start talking and describing the picture. Once they have finished, the video is immediately loaded onto the

wondering how I could get my students to do more speaking outside the class if they haven't got access to natives. Suddenly I have a way.

ONE OF THE biggest problems is what to do with the 30 JING videos that your students have sent you where they are talking about their houses (or whatever). I don't send back individual feedback; rather I play through all the videos and take notes on problems of pronunciation, grammar etc. I usually highlight one or two good examples and play them in class and then provide some general rather than specific feedback.

FOUR YEARS AFTER writing my first article on screen capture, I am still amazed with the many ways it can be used. Whenever I give a talk people are always surprised with just how easy JING is and how applicable it is to many teaching situations. It is still without a doubt my favourite piece of technology. 

Further information

To read the press articles in the Independent, the Guardian and the Times Higher go to

<http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/feedback.html>

To read a Journal article about screen capture look at

<http://www.hltmag.co.uk/dec08/mart.htm>

To watch Russell Stannard talking about other ways he uses JING watch his IATEFL presentation from last year

<http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2010/sessions/2010-04-09/web-20-tools-make-difference-russell-stannard>



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You can now do both online at:

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Online teaching via

Many teachers and learners routinely use Skype for private and business communication. Olga Chetverikova illustrates how this platform can be harnessed for online lessons.

I STARTED USING SKYPE for my online classes a year and a half ago. My students were interested in learning language but wanted to cut down their expenses. The major difficulty was related to the fact that many people have an innate fear of using it because they conventionally assume that nothing can be better than a face-to-face session.

Many people assume that nothing can be better than a face-to-face session

Skype is a unique technology allowing you:

- TO DELIVER class in real time regardless of distance and time zone;
- TO MONITOR your students' progress both via webcam and chat; the latter can be used both to clarify difficulties



and to encourage students to practice their writing/typing;

ONE MAY ARGUE that typing is a different skill to writing and I agree with that. The best solution would be to give writing as homework after typing in class. Students can write their essays or any other type of homework and scan it to a PDF and then email it to the teacher. Those students who use Skype are normally quite advanced in these issues so this is unlikely to cause any inconvenience.

Using Skype requires:

- BROADBAND – otherwise you're going to have



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problems with the connection and may not be able to hear or see your student properly;

- A WEBCAM configured to Skype. For the teacher, I would recommend having two or three webcams as it considerably facilitates communication;
- HEADPHONES WITH microphone: you can also use advanced headphones (or



even cameras sometimes) to record the class, so that afterwards you can save the file in mp3 format and send it to your student as part of the resume of the class.

Due to the technological aspect of the connection, the following applies:

- ENCOURAGE YOUR students to have a cheap webcam if they cannot afford a decent one: if they don't have a webcam, the maximum work time will be limited to 45-60 min; if they have a webcam you can extend it to 90-120 min
- ALWAYS REMEMBER to add your students to your call list so that you can contact them; otherwise they can be waiting for you on the other side and all you can see is the grey icon saying that they are not there.

without causing any tiredness or distress – seeing you helps your students to feel confident and motivated;

- ASK YOUR students to prepare to be more organised as you can always send PDF or Word files 10-15 min before class and then work on these materials or templates. This can be crucial if you're preparing for exams and need to cover a certain amount of materials related to grammar and vocabulary;

*Skype classes
improve
listening skills,
foster creativity
and boost
confidence*

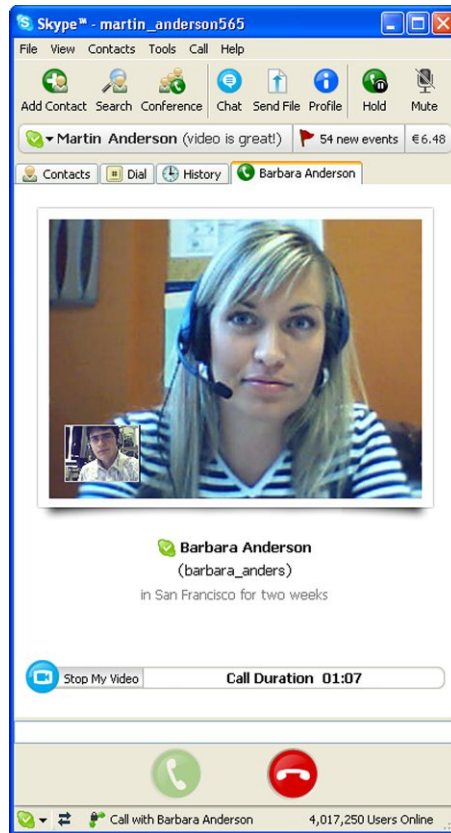
CLASSES VIA SKYPE help to develop better organisation and communication skills, significantly improve listening skills, foster creativity and boost confidence as the teacher is not physically present but communicates via the on-screen display.

TIPS

- SKYPE CLASSES require thorough planning and a profound knowledge of the students' abilities as it can lead nowhere without proper preparation.
- ALWAYS BE realistic with the goal, since you need to cover everything you've planned in the time provided.
- ALWAYS KNOW what additional prompts you need to provide smooth a progression; you can always share files such as pictures, charts and images using the 'Share Button.'
- SKYPE GIVES a rare chance to develop speaking and listening skills, whilst writing and reading tend to fall into the category of homework.
- ELICITATION AND concept checking are used more extensively due to the online format.
- UNCONVENTIONAL TYPES of activities directed at developing prognostic skills are better suited for this than class training.

- USE YOUTUBE alongside Skype as it's a perfect source of native speech, provided you feel comfortable with YouTube and know what you're looking for.
- USE LINKS to everything you find rewarding and progressive in terms of other media and sources – for example, BBC podcasts, The Economist, British Council BritLit project, etc. – either by sending the link or download.
- THE FACT that your student is connected to the world wide web at the same time as you are is advantageous as you can both use links to access materials which are otherwise not downloadable.
- SKYPE IS a very good way of getting your students to join a group on Facebook and continue communicating via chats and forums.

Skype is a cost-effective and efficient technology that saves time and money



FORMATS

THERE ARE AT least two possible formats:

- ONE-TO-ONE – when you dial via Skype and connect to your student;
- CONFERENCE CALLS – when you can have two and more students listening to each other – you need to make sure they are of the same level, though.


PROBLEMS

- ONE OF the main difficulties is psychological, as students need to relax and feel comfortable in order to learn faster. It usually takes 2-3 classes for them to feel at

ease with the format and the technological aspects of it.

- CONCENTRATION, ATTENTION span and strain on the memory need to be taken into account, as it's harder to understand both sides due to the fact that webcams operate in real time. It's as if you are live on TV but with a student on the other side who feels exactly the same and also needs to concentrate in order to learn.
- FINDING THE right balance between the types of exercises involved and sticking to a tight time limit as you need to fit it in with your client's schedule.
- ORGANISING TIMES for classes and reminding them in advance, since it is the first thing students will forget.

FUTURE

SKYPE FROM MY point of view offers great potential to become as widely used for language teaching as Twitter for communication. It is a cost-effective and efficient technology that saves time and money and which in my view has a promising future. I would really like to encourage teachers to try and use it. 

Images: Skype®; sweex.com

Classroom dynamics of virtual learning environments:

a humanistic perspective



Virtual learning environments such Moodle are being used with varying degrees of success by many tertiary educational establishments. Anna Turula argues that student participation in VLEs can be improved by analysing and responding to group dynamics.

IN MY ARTICLE I intend to look at virtual learning environments (VLEs) – with particular regard to the Moodle e-learning platform – and examine them from the perspective of group dynamics. This is because, as I am going to argue, VLEs are first and foremost *learning environments*, with most of their group-related properties.

WITH THE ABOVE assumption as a point of departure, I would like to show that, in addition to a number of new-media-related constraints on e-learning mentioned in literature (cf. Dudeney and Hockly 2007), e-tutors have to account

for the psychological forces and notions of “what goes on in and between people in the [virtual] classroom” (Stevick 1980: 4). To prove this point, I will present the results of a study into one b-learning project I carried out with my students in the years 2008/2009.

particular regard to intergroup forces. However, before pointing out the ways in which these forces operate in VLEs, it seems necessary to introduce the very concept of classroom dynamics.

LEARNING OF EVERY kind requires an encounter. Dewey (1938) sees

The private process of learning is influenced by the quality of the public context in which it takes place



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THE POINT THAT is often made in relation to e-learning is that using new technologies in education is not an end in itself but rather an up-to-date means to an end. What follows is the statement that the new form is but a vessel for the old content. In language pedagogy, the latter is understood through certain principles, both cognitive and affective (cf. Brown 2001). For me, one of such principles is humanising teaching, with

interaction as one of the key concepts of education. In Maslow's hierarchy (1987), higher needs, like self-actualisation, are group-related. In light of the client-centred approach of Rogers (1951), we learn only with the help of others – we need somebody to remove the shutters and blinkers from our eyes. As Castillo (1998:8) states:

“Learning a language, like the learning of anything else, is

essentially an individual achievement ... But typically this private process takes place in the public context of the classroom, the individual is one of a group”.

IF THIS IS so, the private process of learning has to be influenced by the quality of the public context in which it takes place. In other words, it is motivated by “what goes on *in* and *between* the people in the classroom (Stevick 1980:4; emphasis mine), a quote which seems particularly fit for the definition of classroom dynamics.

IN LIGHT OF the above, classroom dynamics depends on two kinds of processes: concerning the learner him/herself as well as the learner’s rapport with the group. The first sphere, as I argue in another publication (Turula 2006), contains factors such as: the level and type of motivation; auto-perception, including one’s self-esteem as a language user; learner autonomy with its belief in one’s personal responsibility for one’s educational successes and failures; and the know-how of learning strategies, which facilitate the language process and make it independent of the teacher. In turn, the *between* area will include issues such as building the sense of we-as-a-group, reinforcing group affiliation and the readiness to conform and prioritise group objectives over one’s own agenda; issues Moskowitz (1978) refers to as “caring and sharing in the foreign language classroom.”

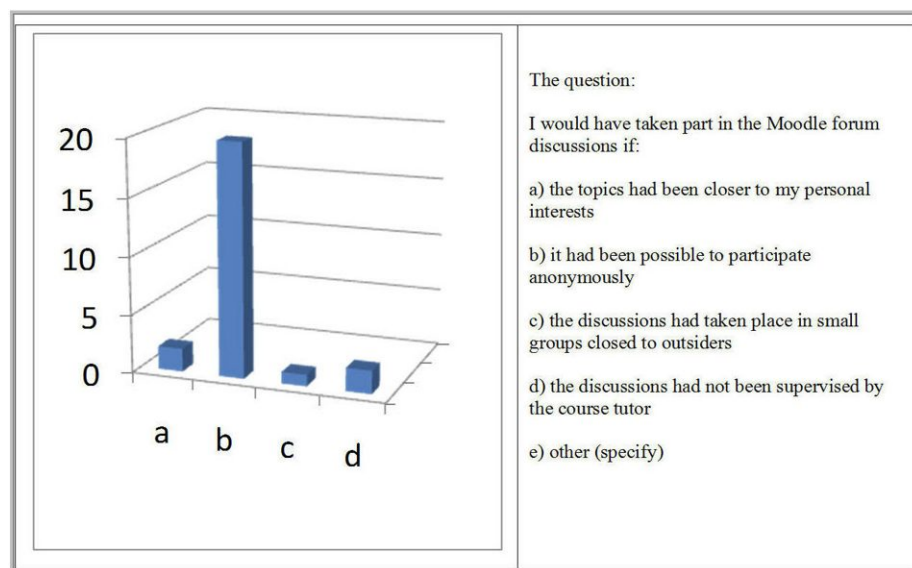


Fig. 1

THE TWO GROUPS of factors translate into classroom practicalities in many different ways depending on the learner’s

The teacher operating in a VLE will face all kinds of human-factor constraints

age or cultural background. As my article concerns adult learners at the university level, positive classroom dynamics will spring from the following factors (Billington 2002: 2):

- *students feel safe and supported*, individual needs as well as abilities and life

achievements are acknowledged and respected;

- *intellectual freedom* is fostered; *experimentation and creativity* are encouraged;
- *faculty treats adult students as peers*;
- *self-directed learning*;
- *pacing or intellectual challenge*;
- *active involvement in learning* as opposed to passively listening to lectures; and
- *regular feedback mechanisms*.

WHEN IT COMES to virtual learning environments, all the above-mentioned characteristics are certainly applicable, because VLEs are learning environments as much as they are virtual. That is why the teacher operating in this kind of educational milieu will face all kinds of human-factor constraints, including lack of motivation, low

self-esteem, insufficient learner autonomy and poor knowledge of learning strategies as well as social anxiety understood as fear of the prospective interpersonal evaluation (Oxford 1999) reinforced by the group's inability to affiliate and conform. The two above-listed groups of factors are what happens *in* and *between* people in the classroom, which, as mentioned before, is the definition I use for classroom dynamics.

*Classroom
dynamics impact
on a group's
willingness to
participate*

THE FACT THAT VLEs are sensitive to problems of classroom dynamics is demonstrated here on the basis of my own experience as a teacher facilitating a blended learning teacher training course at a university in Poland. My course lasted for one academic year (October-June) and consisted of two parts: the theory of language learning and teaching (winter term; October-January) and the practice of TEFL (spring term; February-June). In both parts of the course, students were required to participate in face-to-face classes (3-4 hours a week) as well as complete a number of

assignments on the Moodle platform (collaborative wiki use; shorts essays; forum discussions; MovieMaker clips; etc.); the Moodle also worked as a lecture handout database as well as a kind of e-library containing links to recommended reading material.

IN THE WINTER term, online participation was almost non-existent. Nine discussions at different forums resulted in as few as eleven contributions posted by three participants (out of 25). Additionally, one post, which was specifically requested of a certain student (an expert in the area discussed), started with a face-saving introductory phrase of "I have been asked to comment on ...". The first and the easiest explanation of this fact is that the contributions were scarce because they were voluntary (no credits

that the group's unwillingness to participate was motivated by factors other than simple laziness. My hypothesis was that the said lack of Moodle contributions was due to issues related to negative classroom dynamics of the group, with special regard to social anxiety.

IN ORDER TO prove the hypothesis I carried out two tests: a course satisfaction questionnaire, in which one of the questions addressed the reasons for the lack of participation in the Moodle discussions; and the Foreign Classroom Language Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986). When it comes to the first test, students' the answers to the questions (fig. 1) demonstrate a strong preference for anonymity as well as show fear of exposure and resulting negative evaluation.

QUESTION	MEAN	SD
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class	3.333333	0.795822
I worry about making mistakes in language class	3.238095	1.179185
I keep thinking that other students are better at languages than I am.	3.428571	1.325573
I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	3.428571	0.74642
I don't feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.095238	0.768424
I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	3.142857	1.152637

Fig. 2

were awarded for posting messages). This may be true but only up to a point because at the same time assignments other than forum posts (which were optional, too) were regular, lengthy and diligently written. In light of this, a more probable explanation was

This is further confirmed by the results of the scale used, in which the six questions whose answers scored above the borderline level¹

¹ There were 5 possible answers to every question: 1) strongly agree; 2) agree; 3) neither agree or disagree; 4) disagree; 5) strongly disagree. 3 was regarded as a border answer in the sense that average scores above 3.0 were

show group-related tensions and apprehensions (fig. 2).

IF WE GO back to the assumption made at the beginning of the article that classroom dynamics is a combination of *in* and *between* factors, we can see that the results presented in fig. 1 and fig. 2 can be ascribed to both of them: low learner self-esteem as well as group rapport issues.

BASED ON THIS observation, a repair programme was designed for the summer term. First of all, two face-saving elements were introduced into the course: points were assigned for forum posts¹; and the students were allowed to participate in discussions under assumed aliases. Additionally, a number of confidence-building activities were used both in class and online. Following Davies and Rinvold (1990), I applied class routines designed to exclude feelings of isolation, being judged and out of control. In practice, it amounted, respectively, to: diminishing group territorialism by varying grouping patterns; offering formative feedback and assessment; and allowing for extensive student choice of assignments.

AS A RESULT of this repair program, student participation in online discussions grew considerably. After just two months of the course, the seven started discussions (cf. nine in winter term) regarded as anxiety-positive.

¹ This routine is seen as face saving rather than instrumentally motivating for reasons to be mentioned later in this article.

term) attracted ten participants (three in winter term) who posted 51 messages (eleven in winter term). The fact that three of the contributors did not stop posting messages after having reached the limit of points assigned for discussion participation is ample proof of the fact that the reasons for the increased participation went beyond instrumental motivation, and could be ascribed

*As a result of the
repair program,
student
participation
grew
considerably*

to the improved classroom dynamics.

ALL IN ALL, going back to Billington's characteristics of positive classroom dynamics in an adult group, I can speculate that rapport in my group improved because:

- the aliases helped the students feel safe;
- the choice of assignments fostered independence and critical thinking; as a result, students felt in charge of their learning, peers rather than subordinates to the course tutor; besides, they were able

to choose tasks that presented an appropriate intellectual challenge; and the increased activity on the Moodle supplemented the lecture-based, more passive part of the course with experiential learning.

IN CONCLUSION, IT can be said that:

- If e-learning environments are like other environments and their participants are subject to *real-world* driving forces and constraints, including *affective* constraints, ...
- ... e-group processes will be sensitive to *humanising teaching*,
- which is best implemented as b-humanising: a combination of on- and off-line measures.
- There will be students unaffected by these measures, ...
- ... but some will benefit. As in every teaching/learning environment.



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Learning Technologies SIG

Aims

- To raise awareness among ELT professionals of the power of learning technologies to assist with language learning and teaching
- To develop members' expertise in the uses of technology for language teaching and learning
- To provide a forum for the discussion of issues relating to the use of technology in ELT
- To contribute to the knowledge base in ELT on good practice and latest developments

How to get involved in the Learning Technologies Special Interest Group

THERE ARE MANY ways to become actively involved in the Learning Technologies SIG: by attending events, holding workshops or giving talks, contributing to the newsletter or serving on the committee.

TO JOIN THE committee you need to be a member of the LTSIG. Details of roles are published on the committee page of the website (<http://ltsig.org.uk/committee.html>). Each member of the committee is in their post for an initial two years. When a term is up, a committee member can apply to continue in the role.

Other SIG members will then be encouraged to apply for the position. If there is only one candidate, then this person is elected. If more than one person is interested in a role, then the LTSIG members will be asked to vote for one of the candidates.

IF YOU WOULD like to know more about becoming involved in the SIG or what a particular post involves, please contact the LTSIG Coordinator:

graham.stanley@gmail.com

The digital divide

– the story so far

In the first of a three-part series, Kevin Westbrook examines the acceptance of technology in the ELT community



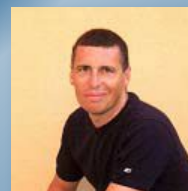
THE HISTORY OF language teaching, in recent years especially EFL teaching, has been accompanied by a sound-track of heavily-laden bandwagons rumbling along, with the passengers cheering the latest solution to all our problems. At the beginning, this has often been without a scrap of evidence that the new method or approach is “better” than the previous one. After a few years, the process starts again with a new silver bullet. In the current “post-methods” era, it would have been nice to think that we had got over this. However, the current position of technology in the learning process suggests that we have gone from one extreme to the other. In the past, an unproven approach was heralded as the answer to our dreams. Now, the use of technology in language teaching, with plenty of solid evidence that it is helpful in enhancing learning, is either

ignored or vilified. The standing of learning technologies (LT) was exemplified a while ago by a contribution to a thread in a well-known forum, where it was stated that “the best piece of technology for the EFL classroom is white chalk and a green “blackboard” (IATET forum 22 March 2009). I had a fun time two summers ago teaching in a room with such a board, but calling it the best piece of technology?

In terms of technology, we have gone from one extreme to the other

THIS ARTICLE IS the beginning of a three-part series that aims to look at the situation regarding what I have termed the digital divide. In

the context of language teaching, this refers to the difference in use of LT within the profession, not to the ability to use it or its accessibility, although the latter is clearly highly relevant to the degree of use. In the process I will sometimes play devil’s advocate. I am also interested in conducting some research in this field and it would therefore be perfect if it can stimulate some debate. There is a new LinkedIn group called “Learning Technologies for Language Teaching” that would



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serve this purpose very well. The three articles will look at the various technologies and their level of acceptance, review current technologies and look to the future, and, finally, and hopefully using some input from readers of these articles, consider the nature of the problem and possible solutions.

THIS FIRST ARTICLE looks at acceptance of technology and what might influence it in general terms. Technology is relative. The pencil was a major advance, and the ball-point pen is not that old, but still an example of technology of its time. Douglas Adams, a well-known technophile, put it like this:

- 1) Everything that's already in the world when you're born is just normal;
- 2) Anything that gets invented between then and before you turn thirty is incredibly exciting and creative and with any luck you can make a career out of it;
- 3) Anything that gets invented after you're thirty is against the natural order of things and the beginning of the end of civilisation as we know it until it's been around for about ten years when it gradually turns out to be alright really.¹

ONE OF THE aspects of acceptance, then, concerns the degree to which the "technology"

¹ Douglas Adams (1999)
<http://www.douglasadams.com/dna/19990901-00-a.html>



Fig. 1: E-mail has the highest degree of acceptance

is just normal. This includes whether it is something completely new, or a development of previous, accepted "stuff." Thus the cassette player has been around for a while, and most people would probably feel confident using one of its successors – the CD, DVD, mp3 player. The PC has also been around for long enough that anybody who was over thirty at the time a credible, mass-market product was invented would now be at least 70, so for most teachers it is a normal, accepted part of life and used as such. On the other hand, Second Life, and virtual worlds like it, is an entirely new concept with no strong links to previous, accepted technology. Its acceptance is quite low in the world in general, and even more so in teaching.

IF IT IS new, then how easy is it to learn and use? The basics of Microsoft Word are not that

different to a typewriter, so it is reasonably easy to start using it and develop your skills over time. Taking Second Life again, even fans recognise there is a significant learning threshold before you can do anything sensible there, let alone act confidently and conduct teaching.

HOW ACCESSIBLE IS the technology to the potential user? This can be very clear in the case of interactive whiteboards. If they do not exist where you teach, it is a little difficult to even learn them, let alone use them for teaching. However, other technologies may cost you money, or require a higher level of computer equipment than you have. Maybe a broadband internet connection is a practical necessity but is unavailable in your location. The use of some platforms or Skype conferencing can be almost impossible without a reasonably fast connection.

HOW “CLUNKY” IS the technology? One of the ways that technology becomes invisible is when it just works as it should. Car engines are getting to that stage. They are serviced once a year, we have automatic warning systems for when oil gets low, for example; otherwise we barely have to open the bonnet. E-mail is very mature, although spam makes its use sometimes rather tedious at times. Blogging software also pretty much does what it should.

ALL OF THE above relates to the teacher as a user of technology, without it necessarily being an LT. It is all fairly irrelevant if the teacher sees no purpose in implementing it within a course. In other words, the teacher’s personal attitude to the technology and to teaching and learning will also affect whether a technology is learnt and used.

YOU MAY HAVE noticed that the learner has been absent from this discussion so far. Generally speaking, as teachers we make decisions about what we use in our teaching and how we present it based on our assessment of its worth within the course, and whether we feel the students can handle it. I would suggest the same applies to technology, with some caveats. First, the students have to understand how to use the technology. With a wiki, that can be an issue and require time to be taken to introduce them to it. They also have to be able to access it in a suitable way: if you

need broadband, so do they. Finally, and very interestingly, if the technology is already integrated into their lives, like Facebook, there is some evidence to show that students might resent school and teacher intruding into “their” world.

The teacher’s attitude will affect whether a technology is learnt and used

TO SUMMARISE, THE degree of acceptance of a technology depends on a number of factors:

- the degree of integration into normal life
- the threshold that needs to be overcome in order to be able to use it
- whether it introduces something new, or is merely a different way of doing an accepted thing
- attitude to the technology in terms of the personal/learning/teaching domains
- access to the technology
- maturity of the technology
- personal theory of teaching/learning

WE NOW HAVE a fairly superficial overview of the factors that might

affect the acceptance of any given technology by an individual. Although I have mainly used examples for a teacher, the student acceptance would be affected in a similar way in most respects. This leads to a situation where multiple factors are involved both concerning the teacher and each individual student. The decision to use a given technology in teaching is then affected by other factors, including how confident the teacher is in using it with students: with the almost infinite number of ways that the technology can let you down, you have to be self-assured enough to deal with the problems as they arise.

AT THIS STAGE, I would like to suggest a list of examples of those LTs that have the highest level of acceptance among teachers for their teaching (see also fig. 2). I hope people will be willing to add to this or to shoot it down in flames: it is part of my attempt to get a more accurate feel for how LTs are actually being used. Note that I include all interactions with students, not just explicit teaching/learning. I also make no judgement about how well it is being used, from a pedagogical or technical standpoint.

HIGHEST

E-mail, text-based internet sources, word-processing software, digital projectors, CD/DVD material, USB sticks.

PowerPoint-type software, internet audio, mp3 material, internet video.

Blogs, interactive whiteboards, authoring software (e.g. Hot Potatoes)

Learning platforms, self-recording audio and video activities, wiki, forums, Skype

LOWEST

Second Life

THIS AIMS TO show the relative use of these technologies across language teaching as a whole. It probably suffers from a European perspective, and your view of the relative positions will undoubtedly be influenced by where you do your teaching.

THIS MAY BE all well and good, but why is it of any importance? Is it of any importance? You will probably not be surprised to find that I think it is. There are several reasons:

1. Whereas many of the people in the EFL field conduct themselves very much as professionals, the profession as a whole has a long way to go. If we as a group fail to recognise the need to develop and use new techniques to improve the learning process as they become available, we are failing the profession as a body. There is ample evidence of the usefulness of LT and it is therefore the duty of the profession to promote it.

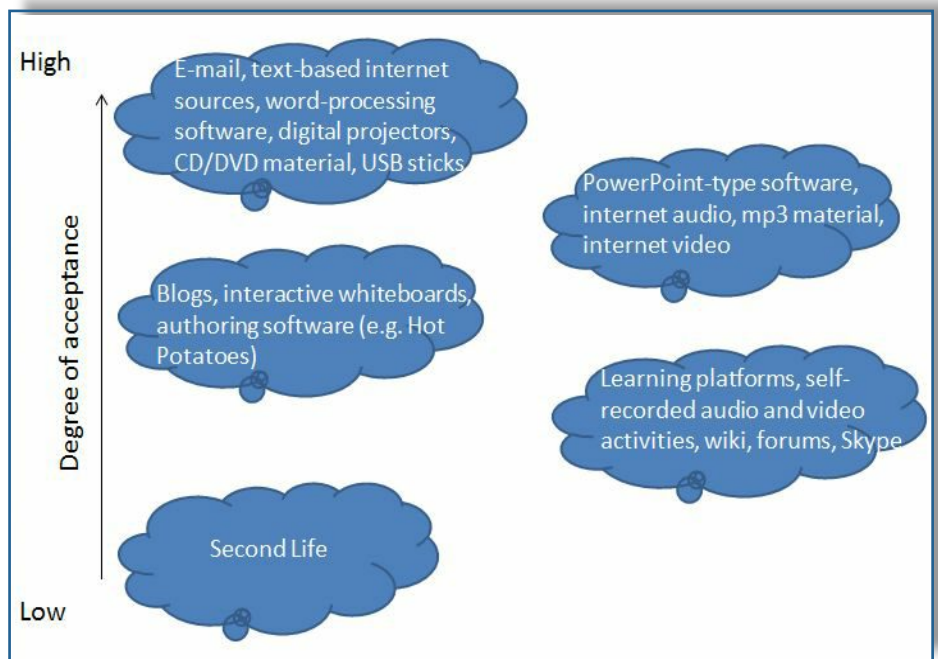


Fig. 2: Degrees of acceptance

2. As professionals, we have a duty to develop as teachers.

more flexibility about when we work.

It is the duty of the profession to promote the use of learning technologies

This includes a considered and principled use of the techniques available to us, learning new ones as necessary. Who would consider it reasonable for a doctor to insist that the old ways were best and no, you can't have an MRI scan?

3. Used appropriately, technology can be a way to both save time (yes, really) and to provide

BOTH THE FIELD of learning technologies and the concept of acceptance are very complex. Apart from the specific points already made, acceptance is undoubtedly influenced by geography, culture and age. LTs can be almost anything, especially where it is web-based, and often were not developed for teaching at all, let alone for language teaching. An attempt to provide a complete classification is thus doomed to failure. However, I am already moving into the theme of the next articles. Having considered acceptance of technology in general, the next article will look at the current state of LT and how it might develop.





IATEFL BESIG Summer Symposium 2011

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Friday 24th & Saturday 25th June, 2011

University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK

The School of Languages and International Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, UK, takes great pleasure in inviting you to the IATEFL BESIG Summer Symposium on Friday 24th-25th June, 2011.

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International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL)

Academic skills in the digital age

Locating and citing Creative Commons images

How can EAP students incorporate high-quality visual material into their language work without infringing copyright and how can we raise student awareness of what constitutes fair use of digital images? Sonja Tack presents a lesson plan designed to solve this dilemma.



INTRODUCTION

AS A RESULT of increased use of technology in the classroom, students may be asked to include digital images in oral presentations and on personal blogs. But here a dilemma arises: how can students incorporate high-quality visual material without infringing copyright? How can we raise their awareness of what constitutes fair use of images? This article reports on a lesson plan I developed and taught to first year undergraduate EAP students which highlights the problem and provides a creative

and immediately applicable solution.

LESSON RATIONALE

I TEACH FOUR sections of Freshman English at a private English-medium university in Turkey. In ENG 101, students are assigned a 40-minute group presentation based on a film related to one of our course themes of media or gender. Since this is a rather daunting assignment worth 25% of their final grade and the students are generally inexperienced at giving presentations, I like to provide them with the opportunity to first do a practice presentation on one of our core readings. This presentation is ungraded, yet receives immediate peer and teacher feedback which can be applied to the final run.

IN ADDITION TO these two presentations, all my students kept their own blogs during the semester to record their ongoing analyses of and reflections on our course material. Both these projects are greatly enhanced by the inclusion of images. Accurate citation of

written sources in APA format is emphasised in ENG 101; consequently, students need to learn how to cite images as well.

LESSON PLAN

(approximately 75 minutes)

I WILL SET out the lesson plan in stages. Each stage will be followed by a commentary on my experience of teaching this lesson to 60 students.

STAGE 1: Presenting the dilemma

-Discuss the following questions:

1. Where do you normally go to find images on the Internet? Why do you choose those sites?
2. Has anyone ever used Flickr to search for images?

Three good reasons to start: huge variety, very high resolution and quality photography.

Go to Flickr (www.flickr.com) and demonstrate a search for "Salman Rushdie" (the students had recently read an article written by



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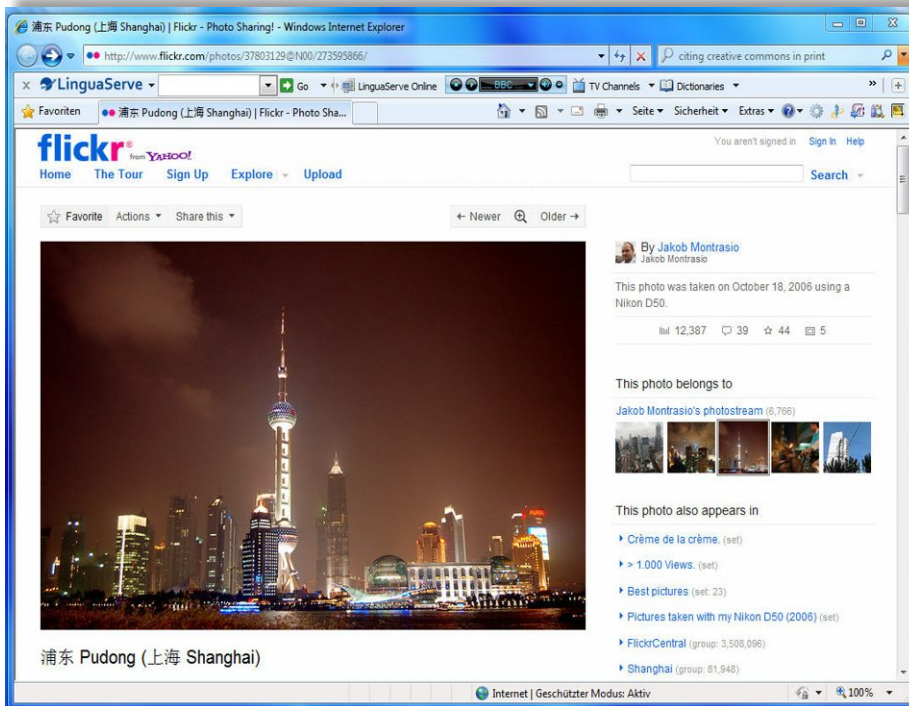


Fig. 1: The Flickr® website is a popular image resource

him). Choose an image labelled with © All Rights Reserved.

Discuss the following questions:

3. What does this symbol/phrase mean?

It means the image is copyrighted and the author retains all rights over the use and manipulation of the image.

4. Are you now free to use this image in your presentation/on your blog?

No.

5. What would you have to do first if you wanted to use it? What are the disadvantages of this?

You would (ideally) need to contact the photographer to obtain permission; this is time-

consuming, you may not be able to reach him/her, and permission may not be granted.

6. What could happen if you decided to use it without obtaining permission first?

You could be guilty of copyright infringement; you may be asked to remove it (from a blog); there could be further penalties; your work may not seem very academic/professional to some audiences; it could be considered unethical.

7. What if you find an image which is not labelled with the copyright symbol? Are you then free to use it?

No, because most images automatically fall under full copyright protection.

8. So what can we do?

Write CREATIVE COMMONS on the board.

STAGE I: Commentary

NEARLY ALL STUDENTS were familiar with Google Images, but I think it's significant that not *all* of them were - here we see evidence of what I like to call the 'cliché of the digital native.' The lesson for the teacher is that we should not assume that just

Just because our students are part of the younger generation does not mean that they know how to use the Internet effectively for academic work

because our students are part of the younger generation, they automatically know how to use the Internet effectively for their academic work. Two or three students mentioned Flickr, but none had used it; two mentioned Image Shack, and one mentioned Cool Iris. So overall, their awareness of where to find images was very limited indeed.

FOR THE MOST part, students knew what the copyright symbol meant, and that they were *supposed* to ask for permission before using images. However, most thought that in the absence of an explicit copyright symbol, the image was available for free use, so this part of the lesson seemed to raise some awareness.

HAVING SAID THAT, I had the impression that only a very few students could appreciate the dilemma between having to respect ownership and getting on with the practical task of finding images for blogs and presentations; most simply dismissed the idea of asking for permission as an unnecessary nuisance. In fact, a couple of students were offended at the very concept of *Internet* copyright, and registered their

Most students dismissed the idea of asking for permission as an unnecessary nuisance

protest in quite strong terms. Their views may be summarised as follows: "That's why people put things on the Internet" (i.e. to be used) and "If you don't want your car to be stolen, don't leave your keys in it." The forcefulness of their reaction was unexpected;

fair use seems to be a concept ripe for exploration and debate.

STAGE 2: Introducing Creative Commons

-Students read the Edublogger post by Sue Waters entitled "Copyright and using images in blog posts" (<http://bit.ly/7pzAsQ>) to find the answers to the following questions. Go over answers and any questions students may have.

1. What is Creative Commons?
2. Why do people use Creative Commons materials?
3. What do the following Creative Commons symbols mean (fig. 2)?

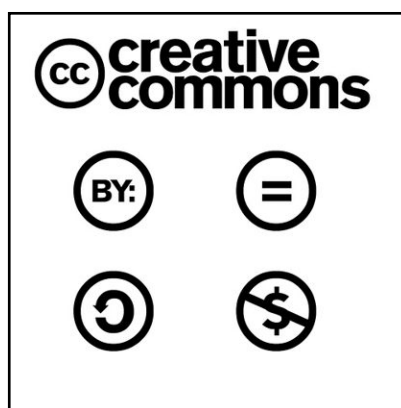


Fig. 2: Creative Commons symbols

STAGE 2: Commentary

STUDENTS HAD SOME trouble understanding the exact meaning of the ShareAlike Creative Commons symbol, perhaps due to their lack of understanding of what copyright is actually for. This licence says that if derivatives of the original image are allowed,

they need to be distributed under a similar licence. In other words, you cannot modify an original image, then copyright it, or disallow further modifications, since it did not belong to you in the first place. Otherwise, the blog post seemed easy for them to follow.

I WAS PLEASED to see that some students were able to anticipate what was coming next in the

Your article in CALL Review

CALL Review welcomes submissions from members and non-members of the Learning Technologies SIG.

Please consider if you would like to submit any of the following:

- Feature articles
- Book reviews
- Hardware and software reviews
- Interviews
- Conference reports
- Announcements of forthcoming events
- Photographs, screenshots
- Anything not included above that might be of interest to our members.

See the submission guidelines on page 2 and send your contribution to the editor:

Maurice Claypole
mc@linguaserve.de

lesson: “Does Flickr filter Creative Commons images?” “I’ve checked some images on Flickr and they’re all copyrighted” and “How do I cite my image in APA format?”

STAGE 3: Using Compfight to search Creative Commons images on Flickr

-Show the CompFight search engine (www.compfight.com); searching Flickr will be more time-consuming since it doesn’t filter images according to their copyright status. Set the search option to Creative Commons only.

-Do a few sample image searches using terms students throw out: What do the symbols mean? Students refer back to quiz answers.

-Students do some searches and choose an image they like.

-Elicit feedback on search: Which image did you choose? What kind of Creative Commons licence does your chosen image have? What can/can’t you do with it?

STAGE 3: Commentary

THIS STAGE WENT very smoothly overall, since CompFight/Flickr has an enormous database, but one student became very frustrated when the search term ‘Big Brother’ yielded no results. His response: “I cannot find what I want, so what’s the point of Creative Commons?” It is important to help students move

beyond ‘literal’ searches. ‘Eye’ might be a better search than ‘Big Brother’, since an eye symbolises voyeurism and a photograph is unlikely to be tagged with ‘Big Brother.’ Again, the teacher should be careful not to assume that students know how to search online image databases effectively at the outset.

STAGE 4: Citing images in APA format

-Refer students to pre-prepared examples of how to cite images in text and in the list of references in APA format.

*It is important
to help
students move
beyond ‘literal’
searches*

-Students open a word processing file, insert their images and practice citing them, both as captions (in-text) and in the list of references; the teacher circulates and gives feedback as necessary.

Stage 4: Commentary

THE STUDENTS FOUND some fabulous images using CompFight, and the next time I do this lesson I will use some of them as examples of what Creative Commons has to offer.

I NOTICED THAT many students

had difficulty locating basic citation information in Flickr, such as the artist’s name, date and title of the photograph. The title is just above the image and the name and date are in the top right corner, and this was also demonstrated to them on the data projector screen. I saw that they quickly scroll up and down the page without really looking, then immediately call out, “I couldn’t find it.” This sort of habit is quite worrying. Instead of simply pointing it out to them, I tried to encourage them to really *look*. For example, I asked them where they would expect to find the title of the image, and so on.


THE CONCEPT OF citing someone’s Flickr username was very strange to them – they wanted to somehow change/formalise it.

CITATION FORMAT PRESENTED quite a challenge, as it is precise and requires attention to detail. Students needed to be encouraged to draft and redraft and continue checking their version against the example to see how well it matched. They should not expect, nor should they be expected, to get it right first time.

WE ONLY HAD time in this lesson to focus on how to cite images for presentations, so I was delighted to read a post on a student blog later that day which included a flawlessly cited Creative Commons image. The student had looked at my blog as an example of how to cite images on blogs (<http://greatfun101.blogspot.com>).

Other students quickly followed suit, and a significant number of bloggers enthusiastically included Creative Commons images with citations in each of their posts for the remainder of the semester.

CONCLUSION

THIS LESSON WAS very useful as a starting point for building up students' e-literacy skills. I learned to revise my assumptions about their level of familiarity and confidence with using the Internet for academic purposes. It also enabled me to identify a number of areas to be followed up in future lessons, which include a deeper examination of the ethics and practicality of Internet copyright, how to do effective key word searches of databases and how to locate relevant information on a web page for citation purposes. 

References

Waters, S. (2008, June 22). Copyright and using images in blog posts [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://theedublogger.com/2008/06/22/copyright-and-using-images-in-blog-posts/> (2010, August 9).

Images

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'Shocked computer user'
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'Karaoke' by Jakob Montrasio licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic

Title montage by the editor



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Corpus research in the language classroom

Concordance software can be exploited by language teachers to promote autonomous learning and help students acquire greater competence. Andrew Prosser illustrates how this technique can be extended to a homemade corpus.

"The most valuable contribution a computer can make to language learning is in supplying, on demand and in an organised fashion, masses and masses of authentic language...the most powerful of these tools is a concordancer"
Higgins (1991)

JOHN HIGGINS' POINT neatly summarizes the value and potential of using corpus data and concordance software in the language classroom. Rather than the relatively small number of ad hoc, made up examples that a teacher on the ground can give, a corpus can offer learners access to large-scale data of authentic language performance. The direct value of concordance software itself is in its ability to provide the means to organize and sort that chosen corpus. In allowing the learner, for example, to isolate a particular word or phrase

(through the 'keyword in context' or 'KWIC' facility) and then see how it behaves in a number of authentic contextual examples, a concordancer can help make underlying patterns in the target language more easily discernible, patterns which learners may have been unaware of or patterns which may check existing misconceptions. In this way, it has even been argued, corpus research may potentially offer a 'short cut' for the language learner in acquiring competence in a foreign language (Stevens, 1993).

THE USE OF corpora and concordance software in the language classroom, as can be seen already, very much envisages a more student-centred, inductive, and autonomous style of learning. A flavour of this is carried in Johns' (1991) re-designation of the



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language learner as a 'research worker', a subject whose learning is powered by access to large amounts of data on which they develop and test their own hypotheses. The degree to which any particular group of learners are used to and thus able to effectively exploit this more autonomous style of learning, and the level to which they have

experience in effectively manipulating concordance software, however, may lead us as teachers to think about how such autonomy and hypothesis testing is going to be properly and suitably supported in the classroom.

THE MAKE UP OF YOUR CORPUS

CONRAD (1999) HAS made the point that an important characteristic of corpus research is that the corpus be a 'principled collection' and one aspect of this is the appropriateness of the varieties represented; corpora of written texts, for example, would not tell you all you need to know about spoken language. Christopher Tribble (1997) argues further that "the most useful corpus for learners of English is the one which offers a collection of expert performances in genres which have relevance to the needs and interests of the learners" and that it is upon such issues of relevance that makes corpus data not merely *genuine*, but the basis of an 'appropriate language activity.' In my own context of South Korea, many learners of English look to travel or study in North America, so unsurprisingly this variety of English is often one upon which they want to focus. As a result, I was looking to use a corpus of American English with them. I'm also British, so I felt such a corpus would additionally be a useful resource for myself in my own teaching generally. A large number of classes, furthermore, I have

been teaching are 'conversation' English classes, focusing on developing learners' general spoken proficiency in everyday situations and topic areas. I was also interested, then, in using a corpus that reflected the kind of unspecialised, general English appropriate to the more interactional, social language exchanges the students are learning about and using in class.

A smaller corpus constructed with a particular set of learners in mind can be more 'finely-tuned' to their needs

CREATING A 'HOMEMADE' CORPUS

TRIBBLE (1997) ARGUES for the value of creating a smaller scale, 'do-it-yourself' corpus for learners, as opposed to the large scale, commercial corpora available on-line, which are often outside the budget of the teacher anyway and can simply serve to drown less experienced learner users in data. Although possibly failing on occasion to provide sufficient language examples, such a smaller corpus, in having been constructed with a particular set

of learners in mind, may have the advantage of being more 'finely-tuned' to their needs. What actually constitutes a large enough corpus seems open to debate, although it seems instructive that researchers in initial learner training in corpus analysis Kennedy and Miceli (2001) and Chambers (2005) have both employed smaller corpora of 50,000 words and 150,000 words respectively, partly to address concerns about overload.

TRIBBLE (1997) ALSO gives an interesting example of creating a small 'quick-and-dirty' corpus of written texts using the CD ROM Microsoft Encarta encyclopaedia. In terms of developing a small corpus of spoken American English, however, finding a 'source' on which to base such a corpus was not as immediately apparent. Taping and then transcribing a sufficient number of conversations involving American colleagues, for example, aside from taking 'quick' out of the whole equation, has other

Any questions, comments or suggestions regarding CALL Review?

Your feedback is welcome.

Please contact the editor:

Maurice Claypole
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disadvantages: such conversations tend to be restricted in terms of variety of contexts, situations and roles of the speakers, which in turn may restrict the variety and scope of language employed.

INSTEAD, POSSIBLE SOURCES of such language data are the large amount of scripts from American television shows available on-line through various fan websites. Scripted conversation has the immediate caveat that in some important ways differs from natural conversation, for example in being relatively free from such spoken language features as elision, hesitation and repetition. It is, though, produced to be recognizable and acceptable as spoken English, and it will therefore contain many of the features, strategies, routines, vocabulary and expressions peculiar to spoken English. McCarthy and Carter (1994) make the point that “dramatized data such as plays and soap operas, not written with any intention of displaying or teaching language forms, are often an excellent source of data considered by consumers to be ‘natural.’ Such material may, moreover, exhibit more topic and situational variety than taping colleagues’ conversations. The actual process of constructing a corpus also becomes a relatively quick process; simply a matter copying and pasting a few scripts into text

pad”) which your concordance software can then read.

*Scripted
conversation
contains many
of the features
peculiar to
spoken
English*

IN LINE WITH Tribble’s above argument concerning the relevance of corpus data to learner needs and interests, I utilized scripts from shows which

involved relatively more social, everyday contexts and events and which would as a result manifest more interactional forms of language performance with, it was assumed, a high occurrence of more regular, general lexis. Rather, then, than cop shows, sci-fi adventures or hospital dramas, which involve a lot of transactional conversations, spectacular and unusual events, together with rather specialist vocabulary, for example, I chose to use such programs as sitcoms and soap operas from which to draw my data. These scripts gave me a combined corpus of around 55,000 words. As a concordancer, I used a piece of freeware, ‘AntConc’ available from: <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html> (fig. 1).

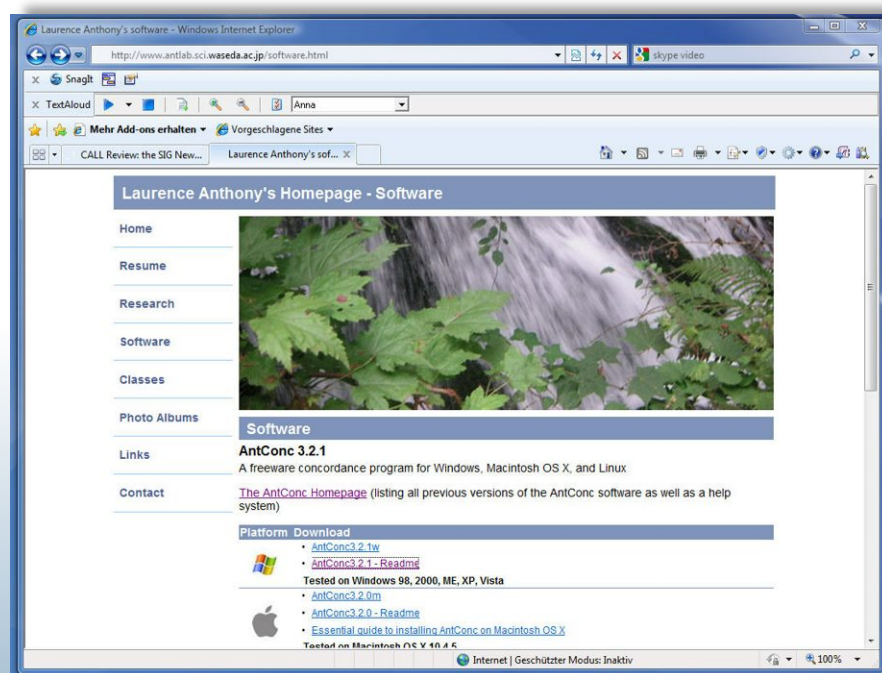


Fig. 1: Laurence Anthony's AntConc download page

USING YOUR 'HOMEMADE' CORPUS IN THE CLASSROOM

EXAMPLES AND SUGGESTIONS for actual practical language classroom applications of concordancing are various. Tribble (1989), interestingly, shows how concordance data from native and non-native speaker corpora might be used to identify and teach the differences. Such a 'remedial' approach is employed by Gaskell and Cobb (2004) in giving feedback to learner errors by means of pasting pre-cast links of relevant native-speaker performance from an on-line concordance engine onto learners' writing. Potentially such applications may encourage the kind of 'noticing' procedure, specifically noticing 'the gap' between learners' interlanguage and the target form, which Schmidt and Frota (1986) argue is a prerequisite for acquisition.

A COMMON REMEDIAL teaching technique in the conversation classroom is, of course, a post-activity stage where language errors the learners made during a fluency speaking activity are written on the board for them to discuss and try to correct. While having the advantage of drawing learners' awareness to problems, such an activity suffers if the error is beyond the scope of their existing language and can simply end up with the teacher correcting the error themselves. It is arguable that using a concordancer would supply learners with the means and language information to discover and construct answers

for themselves. Such an application would, furthermore, seem to make the use of a corpus and concordancer more integral to the classroom dynamic, as an activity that could become a regular feature of lessons, as well as being immediately relevant to the learners' needs.

AS MENTIONED EARLIER in regard to learner guidance and support, depending on your learners'

the nature of error, they are provided in each instance with alternative sentences, one or two sentences containing errors and one with the correct grammatical form or pattern. Task One, then, shows learners how the use of the 'collocates' feature helps them find out information on typical word order, and how words ('I', as well as 'you') with similar grammatical functions may also serve to provide relevant information (fig. 2).

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Collocate
1	360	0	0	just
2	89	78	11	I
3	44	44	0	s
4	37	0	0	Just
5	21	18	3	you

Fig. 2: Screen capture of collocation search for 'just'

comfort in working more autonomously and also familiarity with concordance software, it will probably be necessary to give learners some initial training in a few basic strategies for conducting searches using concordance software. They may then be able to exploit such strategies in more independent work later in the lesson on error correction, or in subsequent lessons. Such training might be done in the manner of 'Handout 1' (fig. 5) at the end of this piece. Learners in this case are provided with three different errors (typical errors made by Korean learners of English). In the interests of providing the learners with additional support in working independently, and in identifying

Task 2 shows them how the 'wildcard' function in concordance software can be used to broaden searches to include appropriate data and the 'context word' function can be used to find words in broad proximity, especially important when looking for grammatical patterns (fig. 3). That the concordancer only produces one example of the target form, moreover, may get learners to reflect on whether this is the basis for a definitive answer and the limitations of the corpus.

FINALLY, IN TASK 3 learners are shown how to formulate their language questions so that their searches produce all the relevant data ('go home' won't pick up

Concordance	Concordance Plot	File View	Clusters	Collocates	Word List	Keyw
Hit	KWIC					
1	...and I can get cleaned up and make us some snacks,					
2	w! I got to get this chair cleaned! She doesn't want					

Fig. 3: Screen capture of concordance search for clean* and 'get'

'went home') and encouraging them to identify other collocates with 'home' (fig. 4), perhaps developing awareness of the potential for 'serendipitous discovery' as a feature of corpus research.

CONCLUSION

USING TELEVISION SCRIPTS from online websites as a source of data then may offer an opportunity of developing a more specialized, focused and manageable corpus of spoken performance. Such a small corpus can be used as a resource by the teacher, or ideally with learners in the classroom. Clearly though, adequate levels of support, for example in training

learners in efficient strategies using concordance software and for working more autonomously needs to be developed in order for learners to most effectively exploit such a resource.

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Concordance	Concordance Plot	File View	Cluste
Hit	KWIC		
1	'll... I'll just see you back home.		
2	sit on your lap the whole way home,		
3	eel that great. I want to get home		
4	mas debacle, you know, I went home		
5	shindig tomorrow night at the home		
6	ight. Shouldn't you be home		
7	idnap her. He gave her a ride home.		
8	out. I'll call you a cab. Go home		
9	el: Hi! Everyone: Hi, welcome home!		
10	See, here's the thing. I went home		

Fig. 4: Concordance search for 'home'

Lesson Handout 1

First, we'll get some practice of using this software.

1. Look at the 2 sentences below. One of them is correct.

"Just you ask him to do it."

"You just ask him to do it."

The problem then is the position of 'just'.

Write 'just' in the 'Search Term' box of the concordancer (on the bottom left of the screen) and click 'Start'. You should get a lot of examples of 'just' being used -397

Click on the 'Collocates' tab on the menu at the top of the concordance and click start again in the 'search term' box. On the right it gives you a list of words that often occur close to 'just' in this corpus. Look to the left of the word and there are two columns: Freq (L), which tells how often the word comes before 'just', and Freq (R), which tells you how often the words come after 'just'.

How often does 'you' come immediately before and how often immediately after 'just'? Look at the results for 'I', maybe that can give you more information.

Which of the two sentences above is probably correct?

2. Look at these three sentences:

"I will get clean my t-shirt"

"I will get my t-shirt cleaned"

"I will get cleaned my t-shirt"

What's the possible problem here? Is it 'clean' or 'cleaned'? And what's the position of 't-shirt'?

In 'Search Term' box write clean*. Writing '*' means you'll get any examples with 'clean', 'cleans', 'cleaned' etc.

Now press advanced, write get in the "Context Word" box, 'get'. In the 'Context Horizon' drop down menu beneath, change the 'From' box from '0' to '4L' and press apply. The concordancer will search for any language examples 'clean', 'cleaned', 'cleans' etc. where 'get' is four words or less to its left.

When you press 'Start', you'll get only two examples from the corpus. The first one is probably not relevant, but the second one is. Which of the above sentences follows the same pattern? You only have one example, though. Is it enough to make a decision on?

3. Here are 3 more sentences:

"I go to my home at 6.30"

"I go home at 6.30"

"I go to home at 6.30"

How do we find which one is right? Maybe by searching for 'go' with the context word 'home'? But what if the corpus only has examples of 'went' with 'home'? This search wouldn't find them. Maybe if you just type 'home' as a search term word (remember to delete get from the 'Context Word' box from your previous search. Look through the first ten examples produced. Which of the above three sentences is probably correct? Can you find any other words that seem to be collocations with 'home'?

Fig. 5: Lesson Handout: Using a concordancer in the classroom



The BYU-BNC corpus interface

Duncan Hunter reviews an alternative website for exploiting the British National Corpus

THE BRITISH NATIONAL Corpus (BNC), with its huge 100 million word collection of texts, has long been a useful resource for teachers and learners. I have frequently made use of the BNC website (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk>) as a means of showing learners how they can quickly check problematic words online to gain a sense of their important patterns, associations and collocations. The website has its own very simple interface. Users enter a search term and get a (usually almost instantaneous) result showing 50 lines randomly selected from the corpus. Users can, after a little study of the correct notation and syntax, make complex queries using the corpus' own query language. However, most students seem happy to forgo this, simply typing in a term that interests them and then picking over the results.

ONE WAY OF looking at the BYU-BNC web page at <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc> is as an alternative interface to the BNC.

It is one of a suite of corpus interfaces designed by Mark Davies, a professor at Brigham Young (hence *BYU* BNC)

Students are impressed when the web page is projected onto the classroom whiteboard

University. His creations also include search engines for the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the *Time* Corpus. I became aware of the website only this year, when I noted its use by a presenter at the 2010 IATEFL conference. Being already something of a fan of the BNC as a resource for language learning, I was struck at once by the potential of the BYU-BNC

interface for classroom and independent study.

THE WEBSITE HAS a number of attractive features. Firstly, and very importantly in my view, it is pleasant to look at. Students generally seem impressed whenever the pale blue web page is first projected onto the classroom whiteboard. But it also offers teachers and learners a range of practical functions which are easy to master. Perhaps its most helpful feature is that it allows users to access not only concordance lines for a given search term, but also a list of related collocates. Users can then



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generate a list of concordance lines for that particular collocation via a simple click. This allows students to carry out their analysis of words much more rapidly, pursuing particular questions and intuitions about words by making a sequence of quick selections. It is also a highly visual tool, offering users toggles and switches that are much easier to master than query syntax. Parts of speech, for example, can be filtered for by selecting the desired Part Of Speech (POS) from a list. Most features can be turned on or off by clicking the '+' or '-' switches that are placed next to them.

THE BYU-BNC web page is of use to teachers and learners at different levels of competence and interest. Some features, such as the ability to generate concordances and lists of collocates, can be picked up very rapidly indeed. Other functions, such as the ability to reorder lists of collocates according to mutual information score rather than frequency, require a little more experimentation. In my first few sessions, I

cover most of the window. Only by moving off the edge of the panel - not easy to spot at first - will the original query panes spring back into view. It also took me a few minutes to work out that I could make particular search boxes appear and disappear simply

The interface features toggles and switches that are much easier to master than query syntax

by clicking on them. With these experiences in mind, I was at pains with learners to indicate that they did not need to get the hang of everything at once. One of the pleasures of the site, indeed, is the experience of unlocking its less obvious functions via some serious experimentative clicking!

providing a link to their institutional homepage, are given highest level access, being allowed to make a greater number of daily searches. While this might sound heavy handed, it makes sense given the fact that the resource might quickly become unusable if it receives too many queries. At any rate, registration is simple and fast, and even users with only 'student' access can make up to a hundred daily searches.

SO HOW CAN teachers and learners best make use of the website? First of all, the potential for classroom games - in which, for example, students guess collocates of particular words, or work together to identify their patterns and frames - is boundless. But for me at least, the real value of such in-class activities is to spark learners' enthusiasm for the website and encourage independent study. Of possible interest to future users is a description of a successful strategy I elicited from an EAP learner who had begun to work with the website on a regular basis. A simple procedure she found useful when writing was to check phrasing she was unsure of, by entering the key noun into the search engine and checking its collocates. If the collocate she expected was present, she would investigate further, clicking on the listed item and looking at the filtered concordance lines to identify underlying patterns and frames. The student apparently found this procedure extremely



Fig. 1: BYU-BNC keyword in context display

found some aspects of the interface rather tricky. When the results panel comes into focus (because it is clicked on or otherwise selected) it expands to

IT IS IMPORTANT to note that after a few trial searches, each user is invited to register. Only those who can demonstrate their academic status as researchers, by

helpful when writing academic essays.

OVERALL, THEN, THERE is a small 'entry cost' for the website's benefits, in that serious users will probably need to register, and a certain degree of exploration might be required to discover the

web-page's most interesting functions. However, neither requirement will take up too much time, especially when compared to the likely benefits. The BYU-BNC website really is an attractive resource which will spark the interest of many

teachers and learners; hopefully leading them to work more frequently with corpora as an enjoyable aid to learning.



Title image: 'Students working as a group'
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Please contact Glenda Smart (glenda@iatefl.org) if you would like to donate, to either scheme, or visit the donations section on the IATEFL website at

<https://secure.iatefl.org/onl/donate.php>

Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning

Pete Sharma reviews an impressive compendium of papers on Web 2.0 technologies

Title: *Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning*

Editor: Michael Thomas

Published by: Information Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)

Copyright: 2009

ISBN: 978 1605661902

Pages: 608

EVERY NOW AND again, along comes a book that makes you sit up and take notice. The Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language

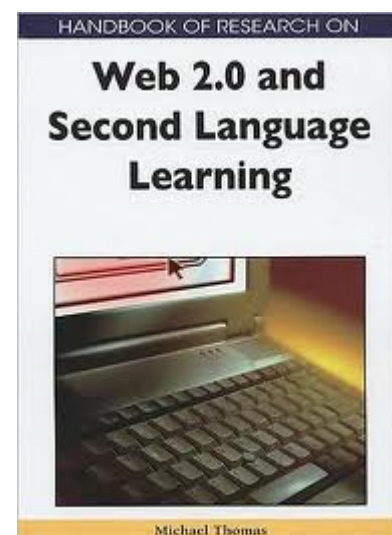
PETE SHARMA is a Director of Pete Sharma Associates Ltd, which runs workshops and seminars in educational technology (www.psa.eu.com). He is a conference presenter, freelance ELT author and has written extensively on technology in language teaching and learning. He is currently working as a university lecturer in English for Academic Purposes. pete@petesharma.com

Learning is such a book. We live in a technology-driven era, and often, pedagogy struggles to keep up. This extensive (over 600 page) handbook will therefore, be welcomed by teachers interested in theory, research and data linked to the intriguing world of Web 2.0 communications.

THE HANDBOOK AIMS to 'investigate how those involved in education – teachers, students, administrators – can respond to the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 technology.' The term Web 2.0 refers to a second generation of web-based communities, where web users are instrumental in creating content. It was a surprise for me to learn the term has been around since 2004, although it was probably known only to a few enthusiasts in those days. Today, it is a fast-moving area and this book sits as a nice counter-balance to the practical work of Nik Peachey in this field.¹

THE HANDBOOK CONTAINS nearly 30 chapters, each an academic

¹ <http://nikpeachey.blogspot.com>



essay with an abstract, bibliography and glossary of key terms. Experts from around the globe have contributed to its pages, including Mark Pegrum, Bernd Ruschoff, Michael Vallance and the IATEFL Learning Technology SIG's own Gary Motteram. The foreword is by Mark Warschauer, well-known in the field and a prolific writer on technology in language learning.

THE PREFACE PROVIDES a useful introduction and establishes the broad theme of the book: 'The shift to Web 2.0 tools can have a profound effect on schools and learning, causing a transformation in thinking. This will happen because the tools promote creativity, collaboration and communication.'

READERS ARE ADVISED to study the nine-page detailed table of contents in order to orient

themselves. They can also skim the one-page overview in which the three sections are summarised. Section One looks at Network Communities and Second Language Learning. Section Two looks at the Read/Write Web and Second Language Learning. Section Three looks at Pedagogy 2.0 and Second Language Learning. The book concludes with a 50-page compilation of references.

THE CHAPTERS HAVE a similar structure: an abstract, introduction, the main body, conclusion, bibliography and glossary of terms. I was excited to read the results of studies on interactive whiteboards in the chapter contributed by writers from Keele University, UK, outlining the effects of the IWB on ways of presenting material and on student motivation. The writers mention the

three stages that IWB enthusiasts go through, described as 'supported didactic', 'interactive' and finally, 'enhanced interactivity.' This, along with the previous chapter on IWBs, are essential reading for trainers.

*The discovery of
new terms, ideas
and perspectives
made exploring
this book a
challenge and a
pleasure*

I FILLED A considerable gap in my knowledge reading the chapter on PLEs, Personal Learning Environments, 'web based tools that are

used to aggregate content.' The chapter points out this is a term where there is yet to be a fully-agreed on definition; it also provides a useful mind map of a students' own visualisation of their PLE.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF teaching are included throughout the book. The contribution by Peter Travis and Fiona Joseph on 'Improving Learners' Speaking Skills with Podcasts' describes an interesting project. Indeed, both podcasting and blogs are extensively dealt with in the book.

TIME AND AGAIN I met terms and content which were new for me, such as Infoxication 2.0, 'an intoxication of excessive informational and communicational demands.' This discovery of new terms, ideas and perspectives made exploring this book a challenge and a pleasure. The huge range of terminology comes from a diverse range of areas, such as technology, Second Language Acquisition, corpus linguistics and EFL. In this brief review, a list of terms randomly culled from the glossaries will give a feel for the nature of the content: constructivism; connectivism; output hypothesis; participatory learning; Web 3.0; computer-mediated discourse analysis; Pbwiki; pingback; SurveyMonkey; Flashmeeting; mobile learning; Self-Determination Theory; Podomatic, wordpress; Feedburner, mashups... It makes you feel glad that there are so many glossaries throughout the book.



Web 1.0 duly laid to rest

HOW DOES ONE begin to tackle such a monumental work as this? Simply by being selective. The signposting is crystal clear, allowing those with limited time to select, or perhaps simply just read the abstracts and the

*This book
may
become a
milestone in
the field*

conclusions of many articles. The reader might choose a case studies of interest: the 'iPod therefore iWrite' project; Skype-based Tandem Language Learning; Using Mobile Technology and Podcasts to Teach Soft skills; producing cell Phone Video Diaries... The book is extensive and I would not recommend the daunting task of ploughing through it all. (Congratulations are due to the Editor for presumably having done so.)

FACED WITH THIS impressive oeuvre, it seems petty to include niggles, but some of the screen shots are a little unclear. The use of terms like 'weblog' is rather quaint and seems rather removed from the commonly used term 'blog.' The very size of the book is

potentially overwhelming, and it would be a shame if readers missed the wood for the trees.

MONUMENTAL IN SCOPE, this tome should prove quite robust in standing the test of time. While new social networking sites appear constantly, nevertheless this book should continue to be relevant for a good while as it deals with 'pedagogical frameworks' which will be applicable to new, emerging examples of Web 2.0. Sections such as the literature review and the research questions

will clearly benefit those taking a master's course in educational technologies. This book may become a milestone in the field; it deserves to be explored by more than only users of university libraries. It is a sad fact that it will never find its way onto the humble bookshelves of the average private language school, and that its contents need to be read selectively by even the most avid reader. Comprehensive; impressive.



Photo: Graham Stanley



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Digital Asia:

Language, technology and community

Michael Thomas reports on the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG event in Nagoya 2010

SINCE 2007 NAGOYA University of Commerce & Business (NUCB), supported by the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG, has organized five international events about language learning technologies, principally focused on an exploration of emerging Web 2.0 tools and digital technologies (blogs, wikis, virtual worlds, social networking sites, user-generated content). These events include the 13th Annual JALT CALL conference and four one-day Wireless Ready symposia. A website is still available for the Wireless Ready symposium series

keynote speakers, as well as other conference resources. The most recent event, the 4th International Wireless Ready Symposium, took place on 19th February 2010 and was entitled, “Digital Asia: Language, Technology and Community”, a title that reflected the current interest in online networks and communities and the predominance of sociocultural theory in language education. Although IATEFL is an international organization, it has few members in Japan and one of the motivations of the symposium series has been to bring together

The event focused on online networks, communities and the predominance of sociocultural theory in language education

(<http://wirelessready.nucba.ac.jp>) and a number of resources can be accessed, including the online proceedings, videos and photographs of previous events and

members of both the IATEFL and its Japanese sister organization, Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). Both organisations once again contributed a



DR MICHAEL THOMAS is the organiser of the International Wireless Ready Symposium series. Among his publications are *Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning* (2009), *Interactive Whiteboards for Education: Theory, Research and Practice* (with Euline Cutrim Schmid) (2010), *Task-Based Language Learning & Teaching with Technology* (with Hayo Reinders) (Continuum, 2010), *Deconstructing Digital Natives* (in press with Routledge USA), *Digital Education: Opportunities for Social Collaboration* (in press with Palgrave Macmillan USA).

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great deal to this popular and successful one-day event.

BUILDING ON THE event's reputation for international keynote speakers, this year's event continued the trend with well-known keynote speakers, including Professor Insung Jung from the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan, and Dr Hayo Reinders, Head of Language Learning and Support at the University of Middlesex in the UK,

and editor of the journal, *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*.

PROFESSOR JUNG'S PRESENTATION entitled, "E-learning, Mobile Learning Development and Research in Asia", was based in part on her recent seminal book publication co-authored with Colin Latchem, *Distance and Blended Learning in Asia* (Routledge, 2010). Her presentation discussed how e-learning and m-learning are being adopted in universities, schools, workplace training and non-formal adult and community education across Asia, and highlighted specific examples of distance learning methodologies in South Korea, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia and China.

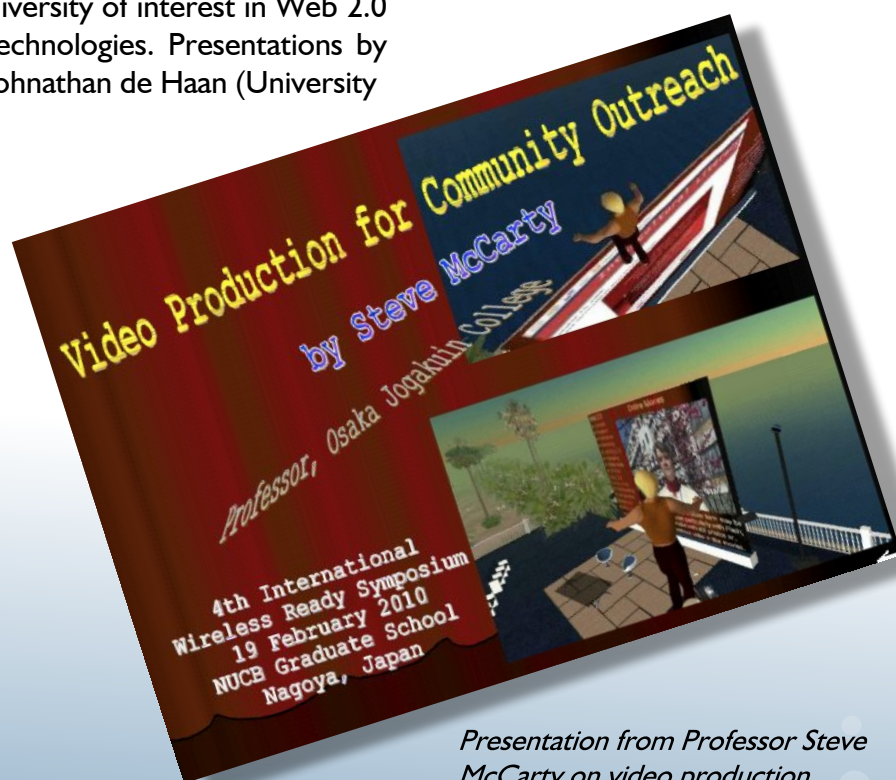
HAYO REINDERS ADDRESSED the topical question of video games in language education, outlining the potential of computer games to improve student motivation, and benefit the development of social skills such as collaboration and metacognitive skills such as planning and organisation. Discussing specific projects in the UK and Thailand, Reinders attempted to remove the layer of hype surrounding these emerging technologies and consider how they could be incorporated into the curriculum. The examples, including that of the high profile use of the Nintendo DS in Japan, provided a rather tenuous connection with language learning beyond a superficial level, and in conclusion the presentation argued that like in all other

teaching and learning environments, careful pedagogic planning is required to take advantage of the potential of video gaming in language education.

Presentations covered Web 2.0 tools, Google Maps, the Kindle, wikis and much more

AFTER LUNCH THERE were a further twenty shorter panel presentations representing a rich diversity of interest in Web 2.0 technologies. Presentations by Johnathan de Haan (University

of Shizuoka, Japan) and Alice Chik (City University of Hong Kong) continued the focus on gaming, exploring community formation and learner autonomy respectively. Using Second Life, we were joined from the UK by Sheehy, Kear, Jones and Herring from the Open University, who gave a virtual presentation entitled, "Designing a Virtual Teacher for Non-verbal Children with Autism: Pedagogical Affordances and the Influence of Teacher Voice". Notable among the other presentations were those which examined a diverse range of Web 2.0 tools and new applications, from Google Maps, to the Kindle eBook reader, texting, online discussion forums,




Presentation from Professor Steve McCarty on video production

wikis, user generated content and personal learning environments.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM A number of publishing houses and vendors consolidated the event's status as one of the most innovative forums for the discussion of emerging technologies in Japan. The display by Tokyo-based EnglishCentral (www.Englishcentral.com) was

particularly prominent and popular with participants.

AS THE ORGANIZERS of the event, we are once again grateful to the Learning Technologies SIG, Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, and the JALT CALL SIG for supporting this event in Japan. The series of events, which have always attempted to

incorporate new technologies into the usual conference format (including Twitter, hybrid presentations utilising Second Life, presentations with interactive whiteboards, a conference social networking site), will surely reappear in the future. 

Second Life images: Michael Thomas



For your diary

Forthcoming IATEFL and SIG events

Manchester, UK

IATEFL will be at present the EnglishUK Conference
4 – 5 March 2011

Brighton, UK

All 14 IATEFL SIGs will be holding a pre-conference event at the
Annual IATEFL Conference
15 April 2011

Preston, UK

IATEFL BESIG Summer Symposium
Teaching Business English with Digital Technologies
24 – 25 June 2011

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Deadlines for IATEFL Conference, Brighton 2011

Friday 7 January 2011

Deadline for speakers to pay their registration fee

Friday 28 January 2011

Deadline for all other delegates to benefit from the early bird rate

Friday 15 April 2011

IATEFL Conference PCEs and Associates' Day

Rebooting the conference:

technologies in education

Wayne Rimmer reviews a unique conference event held at the British Council, Moscow



WHEN IS A conference not a conference? When it's an unconference. You won't find 'unconference' in a corpus (I've checked) but this was the epithet of and rationale behind the three-day event in Moscow devoted to exploring technologies in education. The concept was the brainchild of Gavin Dudeney who on an earlier trip to Russia got the following feedback on a session: 'That was great but there was too much group work. We need more input'. This caused Gavin to question the traditional top-down structure of teacher training and reverse the paradigm. An unconference is one driven by participants, their interests and experience. In practical terms that meant no formal presentations, no plenaries, no workshops and no materials exhibition. Instead, sessions were designed to facilitate discussion and interaction, presenting themes without dictating the content and shape of the session.

AN UNCONFERENCE DOES not equal chaos, although that might be a fair prediction, and the programme was structured around a series of participant-

friendly discussion and interaction opportunities consisting of three-hour sessions focusing on a specific aspect of technology, a live video-conferencing discussion coordinated by this SIG, a café undebate, open slots for participants to contribute and a round-up activity. These are described below. The wonderful organisation of Olga Barnashova and her British Council team ensured that this all fitted together in a wonderfully warm and friendly atmosphere.

Sessions were designed to facilitate discussion and interaction without dictating the content

THE SESSIONS COVERED the following themes: motivation and creativity with technology, mobile learning, online language practice, social networking and personal

learning networks, interactive whiteboards, young learners, e-projects, corpora & concordancers, online teacher development. There is no space to go into the detail of individual sessions but three dedicated bloggers recorded all the content and impressions online.¹ A few brief episodes will give you a taste of the action. In mobile learning, we watched a video of primary school children in the UK using i-pads to find out information about Henry VIII; in social networking, there was discussion of the security concerns involved in publishing personal information online; in corpora & concordancers, language data was

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linked to practical syllabus design; in young learners, there was the sharing and demonstration of a formidable range of resources and teaching ideas, from songs to making movies. It was all a heady mixture of the informative, the innovative and sometimes the incredible (check out what you can do with animated flashcards!).

THE VIDEOCONFERENCING DISCUSSION was hosted by our own Graham as a response to the question 'Where are we now in technology?' As the panelists from five different countries demonstrated, the answer to this varies a lot geographically. Some of my personal assumptions were debunked. For example, from its huge role in IT outsourcing projects, I had always imagined India as a hotbed of everything connected with technology. Instead, the picture in India is very mixed. For example, most schools have only limited internet access.

On the other hand, some higher education institutions have signed agreements with internet providers to get broadband coverage on campus at a very reasonable price. It was hard to draw firm conclusions from the discussion but a common theme was that teachers needed more training in the application of technology. This was nicely illustrated in an anecdote from

Leeds University in the UK where all the lecturers have interactive whiteboards but basically ignore them. You can listen to the recording of the full discussion by following the link in Nicky Hockly's blog.²

THE UNDEBATE WAS held in a café and fuelled by the local brew. It was an undebate in the sense that there were no sides for and against the motion and no vote. The audience / imbibers simply spoke, listened and chipped in as they saw fit. The topic was copyright. There is no doubt that technology has posed challenges to copyright due to the massive increase in access to materials of all types. It is fair to say, as the audience freely admitted, that Russia is not a country where copyright laws are keenly observed. Practical and economic factors seemed to outweigh ethical concerns or legal niceties. Copyright aside, the informality and cosiness of the undebate



format seemed very conducive to frank and constructive discussion.

THE PURPOSE OF the open slots was to provide a space for participants to join in the event. Participants would sign up for twenty-minute slots in which they would lead contributions and reflection around the unconference theme. Amazingly, almost all the slots were filled. Teachers clearly had plenty to say and share. I liked the short and sweet format and the slot that stood out for me was a university teacher talking about how she used wikis as a way of organising her teaching and making her learners more autonomous.

THERE WAS AN air both of celebration and sadness in the round-up activity that finished the event: celebration of new learning opportunities encountered; sadness at coming to the end.


Some relief too as the unconference was an unconventional and risky format, especially in a country like Russia where sessions are traditionally input-rich, heavy and rather formal. So, the million

*The
unconference
changed
preconceptions
about technology
and teacher
training*

dollar question, did the unconference work? Yes, if participants' feedback is anything to go by. There was only one request for more input. A representative

selection of comments is given below.

- It was really interactive, intensive, so much useful and practical information!
- The atmosphere was fantastic; teachers felt comfortable and shared their ideas and experience with pleasure.
- I found practical information shared by colleagues. Thank you for opportunity to talk, share and get new ideas.
- [I liked] Being free to come and leave the room any time you like.

THE UNCONFERENCE WAS not a gimmick. It was a carefully-planned and professionally-executed event with exceptional learning outcomes for those lucky enough to participate. In my case, it changed a lot of preconceptions about technology and teacher training. This is not to say that we should do away with old-fashioned workshops and seminars, just as we should not consign blackboards and paper books to the dustbin. However, there is an alternative to top-down training and this deserves serious attention in teacher education. 

Photos: Wayne Rimmer



¹ British Council unconference site:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/russia-english-unconference.htm>

² Nicky Hockly's blog:
<http://www.emoderationskills.com/?p=290>



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