

Evaluation of short-term CALL projects 1997/98

by Peter Liddell, University of Victoria, BC, Canada

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National Agency for Higher Education

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by Peter Liddell, University of Victoria, BC, Canada
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Table of Contents

Summary	5
Part I – Overview and General Conclusions	7
Preamble	7
General Background	7
The Review Process	8
Overview and General Comments	9
Conclusions	14
Part II – Project-by-Project Review	17
Solveig Granath, Karlstad University	
Project 001/Ling-97	18
Tawfik Mekki-Berrada, University College of Halmstad	
Project 002/Ling-97	21
Gunnar Bergh, Gothenburg University	
Project 003/Ling-97	23
Per Simfors, Mid-Sweden University College	
Project 004/Ling-97	26
Birgitta Berglund-Nilsson, Karlstad University	
Project 005/Ling-97	28
Christoph Röcklinsberg, Linköping University	
Project 011/Ling-97	30
Birgitta Almgren, Örebro University	
Project 013/Ling-97	32
Ulla Birgegård, Uppsala University	
Project 015/Ling-97	35
Hans Lindquist, Växjö University	
Project 016/Ling-97	37
Monica Bjurman, University College of Mälardalen	
Project 017/Ling-97	39
Arne Olofsson, Gothenburg University	
Project 018/Ling-97	42

Elisabeth Wåghäll & Bärbel Westphal, Växjö University Project 019/Ling-97	44
Eva Larsson Ringqvist, Växjö University Project 021/Ling-97	46
Karin Måhlén-Nilsson, Växjö University Project 022/Ling-97	48
Mats Johansson, University College of Halmstad Project 028/Ling-97	50
Britt-Marie Ek, Lund University Project 029/Ling-97	52
Inez Müller, University College of Halmstad Project 030/Ling-97	54
Philippe Grampeix, Umeå University Project 031/Ling-97	56
Per-Arne Öberg, Umeå University Project 034/Ling-97	59
Pat Shrimpton, Umeå University Project 037/Ling-97	61
Gerald Porter, Umeå University Project 038/Ling-97	63
Elisabeth Mårald, Umeå University Project 039/Ling-97	65
Barbro Ekman, University College of Mälardalen Project 040/Ling-97	67
Amadeu Batel & Fernandez Rodrigues, Stockholm University Project 042/Ling-97	69
Magnus Ljung & David Minugh, Stockholm University Project 044/Ling-97	72
Marianne Mathlein, Stockholm University Project 045/Ling-97	74
Sari (Röntynen) Högländer, Stockholm University Project 046/Ling-97	76
Paul Touati, Lund University Project 050/Ling-97	78
Abbreviations	80

Summary

In May 1997, the Council for the Renewal of Undergraduate Education, Grundutbildningsrådet, announced the successful applicants for short-term grants of up to 50 percent of a teacher's time for four months. Focus of the grants was the development of portable programs for university- and university college-level CALL — computer-assisted language learning. The grantholders were aware that their projects were to be made available to other language teachers at universities and university colleges in Sweden.

Of 28 successful project proposals, 13 were submitted by six university colleges, and 15 by six universities. Funding for each project was awarded to one or more teachers, to buy their time from teaching until the end of December 1997. The results of the projects were to be used in the classroom in the spring of 1998.

Peter Liddell, Professor of German and Academic Director of the Language Centre at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, was asked to evaluate the effects of the grants. His Review took place late March to mid-May 1998 and is presented in this publication.

Three of his conclusions are:

”A common difficulty for teachers of foreign languages and cultures who live in an uneconomically small publishing market (Sweden and Canada are good examples) is how to find or create course materials that relate the home culture to the target culture. The opportunities to collaborate on the Internet, and to ‘publish’ course materials on the Web (or otherwise electronically), should encourage Swedish teachers to look at ways of co-developing coursework (e.g. online exercises, grammar-help, databases of realia).”

”Making good use of the Web is primarily a matter of developing good searching skills and a critical approach. In addition, the sheer range and qualitative inconsistency of Web-based information make it a very suitable resource for problem-based learning. One approach is to ‘meta-teach’ (so that students learn about what and how they are learning).”

”On a general level, the implications of IT for institutions of higher learning is, quite understandably, an urgent topic in times of such significant social, political and technological change. No area of post-secondary education can afford to ignore the implications, including (one could argue, especially) the humanities, with their tradition of promoting critical thinking, cultural investigation and intercultural understanding.”

As the quotes above show, Professor Liddell writes not only about the merits and weaknesses of the 28 project but gives an overview of the uses and attitudes towards CALL — computer assisted language learning — at the universities and university colleges he visited, all in all 18. His Review is a reflective document which should be of use not only to the teachers concerned, their colleagues and department heads but just as much to those in a position to make strategic decisions which affect the humanities, and the language departments in particular.

Part I – Overview and General Conclusions

Preamble

In May 1997, the Council for the Renewal of Undergraduate Education (Grundutbildningsrådet — hereafter called "the Council") announced the successful applicants for short-term grants of up to 50 percent of a teacher's time over four months. Focus of the grants was the development of portable programs for university- and university college-level CALL — computer-assisted language learning. The grantholders were aware that their projects were to be made available to other language teachers at universities and university colleges in Sweden. And they were offered the online assistance of three experienced colleagues. The project was to end by December 31st 1997, and results were to be evaluated by an external reviewer some weeks thereafter. This is that Review.

General Background

i. The need (why?)

Swedish teachers of languages at institutions of higher education do not *collectively* have either the depth or breadth of CALL experience of their colleagues in, say, the United Kingdom, the USA, Canada or Australia. A number of individuals have, of course, been very active in CALL in Sweden, at least since personal computers began to reach affordable prices in the mid-1980s. But overall, and with these exceptions, CALL has not become an integral part of language learning at Swedish universities and högskolor to the same extent as it has abroad.

The result is that teachers of languages in Swedish higher education who may wish to explore the potential of CALL are restricted to turning to their relatively few colleagues in Sweden, or looking to foreign sources (print, conferences, personal correspondence), or acquiring (probably foreign) software, which usually requires adaptation before it can meet local needs.

The Internet (WWW and e-mail particularly) has improved the flow of information on CALL immeasurably, but there still remain the twin pro-

blems of how to come in close contact with experienced CALL users and products, and how to adapt these products to local use.

[Note: Acquiring the equipment to make the use of CALL even feasible is a further major problem for language teachers at many institutions. It will be discussed below in more detail.]

ii. The timing (why now?)

On a general level, the implications of IT for institutions of higher learning is, quite understandably, an urgent topic in times of such significant social, political and technological change. No area of post-secondary education can afford to ignore the implications, including (one could argue, especially) the humanities, with their tradition of promoting critical thinking, cultural investigation and intercultural understanding.

The Högskoleverket, National Agency for Higher Education, is involved in several initiatives which are intended to help to keep Swedish universities and högskolor in the vanguard of developments at this time. One example is the Council's short-term CALL projects, which are the subject of this Review.

In 1996, the Council established an advisory group which was to investigate the role of IT in language teaching and learning, and recommend a course of action if it found merit. Following one of the recommendations of this advisory committee, a representative group of experienced and interested teachers (the Lingcal group) led by Professor Jan Svartvik, Lund University, investigated CALL in a week-long workshop which was held at the University of Victoria, BC, Canada, in February 1997.

In April 1997, applications were invited for short-term grants for CALL projects.

The Review Process

i. Dates

The Review took place over the period late March to mid-May 1998.

ii. Procedure

In conducting the review, I visited each successful applicant on site. Typically, interviews lasted 60–90 minutes, depending on the quality of the reports submitted to the Council in late February. The interviews concerned: the applicants' prior experience of IT; the development process; development

time; actual use of and reaction by students to the project; the academic, pedagogical, technical and attitudinal context; future plans for the project. The projects were usually demonstrated. Those not demonstrated were viewed on the WWW.

I also had an opportunity to learn something of the academic context within which the projects would be used, through meetings with senior administrators, department heads, other language-teaching colleagues, those responsible for IT in the departments ("IT-ansvarige"), and people who had developed or were responsible for encouraging the development of Distance Learning. In addition, I visited other institutions with significant commitments to IT (Chalmers, Jönköping, Luleå, Karlskrona, Kalmar, Mölndal teacher training campus of Göteborg University), whether in language learning or otherwise (e.g. media management, foreign exchange programs in engineering or teacher training).

My thanks are due to all those whom I met, for their responsiveness and hospitality.

Overview and General Comments

i. Distribution of the grantholders

Thirty applicants were awarded funding. One subsequently withdrew for health reasons, and one withdrew before beginning, due to anticipated lack of time to complete the project as described. Of the remaining 28 projects, 13 were submitted by six university colleges (högskolor), and 15 by six universities. Umeå University accounted for 5 of these 15.

ii. Portability

Ease of distribution (portability) was a requirement of the grants. Although not specified by the Council, the WorldWideWeb was the platform of choice for the great majority of the projects. Apart from allowing access to anyone with an unexceptional, moderately powerful modern computer and an Internet browser, basing course material on the Web makes it potentially accessible from anywhere at any time, which opens up the possibility of Distance Learning. This is an increasingly inviting area for many of the institutions, particularly, it seems, the högskolor.

A few projects met the portability requirement in other ways: by using the Internet for e-mail or for ftp (file transfer protocol, usually used to

download large texts); or by developing individual, 'stand-alone' programs which will reside on a server and be distributed electronically from there or on a floppy diskette. Video, CD-ROM or DVD are other media which were being considered for some projects.

All projects met the portability requirement, although it will not necessarily be equally easy to distribute all projects.

iii. Time constraint

Given the ease of editing computer programs and the natural urge to improve their quality, as technical and user needs changes or authors' insights and aspirations grow, it is a rare occasion when a non-commercial software program is considered complete or final by its author. Accurate estimates of development time are difficult to achieve at the best of times. Nevertheless, the time-frame for these projects was (deliberately) very limited. Four months of a developer's partial involvement is not long, where software development is concerned.

Two comments should be made here about the time limitation — one reflecting the developers' perspective, the other that of the Council:

- **Developers.** Inexperienced developers — such as many of the project applicants were — found it difficult to calculate in advance the amount of time needed to achieve the goals stated in their applications. Several developers were forced to scale back their aspirations in the light of their experience of what was needed (background reading, online searching, software selection, personnel training, team-building, are some examples). This resulted in some projects being limited to a shell which could be filled in later, or to completion of only the first exercises in a planned series.
- **The Council.** The grants were perceived as seed-money, designed to encourage maximum participation by both experienced and interested but otherwise less-experienced teachers. From that perspective, it was calculated that the new developers would have enough time to create small projects which could be used in class, although not necessarily in a finished or extensive form. More experienced developers would have time to work on existing ideas with fewer distractions. It should also be pointed out that, although online assistance from three experienced Swedish CALL developers was offered by the Council, not many projects used their help.

- Conclusion: Very many projects appear to have taken more of the developers' time than was funded. In the experience of this reviewer, that is not unusual. Both developers and student users tend to spend longer on IT-related tasks than on equivalent paper-and-pencil coursework. It is a mistake to assume that this dedication will always continue, however. Sustaining the interest with realistic support is a better strategy in the long run than exploiting it. For that reason, if such short-term projects are to be considered in future, there should be more precise guidelines which would enable applicants to make realistic estimates of the time required at each step, and hence more realistic expectations for their projects.

iv. Timing of the announcements

The timing of the announcements (after courses had been assigned for the 1997/98 academic year) caused some concern. Several developers were unable to make much use of their projects in class, because they had either not finished enough of the project before the first semester ended, or did not meet the class for whom it was intended during the grant period, or had full teaching responsibilities that were difficult to reassign.

It could be argued that this was foreseeable at the time of submitting the proposals. The alternative — that teachers should not have applied if they thought they would not have had the time to fulfill the requirements of the grant by December 31st — would have, and may actually have, reduced the number of applications.

v. The size of the grants

The size of the grants was relatively small in Council terms. The question might be asked whether it was too small? Given the fact that the intention was to encourage a large number of participants to explore what for many was new ground, the principle of spreading the money widely but thinly seems appropriate. It is unlikely that so much could have been achieved in such a short time without this outside initiative, because many humanities departments or their institutions seem not to have, or to want to risk, scarce budgets in order to explore initiatives in unknown, or little-known territory.

However, in view of the comments about time (above), the grants were apparently spread a little too thinly. With clearer guidelines, more accurate expectations and more lead-time, the pressure of time would no doubt have been less severe. Nevertheless, a grant which covered 25 percent more time (i.e. five months) would evidently have been closer to the actual time spent on most projects.

It should be pointed out that the Council does offer, on a competitive basis, longer-term "pedagogical development" grants, covering 1–3 years, to teachers in any discipline (<http://www.hgur.se/general/projects/hems.htm>). So far, few applications have been received from language teachers. It is to be hoped that some of those who have developed the basis for more extensive projects under this short-term program will be encouraged to apply, individually or collaboratively with colleagues in other institutions, for these longer-term grants.

vi. Funding equipment

The grants were specifically intended only to buy release time from teaching, not equipment. Those who had inadequate equipment, or no access to suitable computers, presumably did not apply; likewise those who saw little or no opportunity to use the projects in properly equipped student computer labs.

The question was raised by several teachers as to why the Council chose to exclude hardware and software as allowable expenses.

The goals of the short-term program which are outlined above emphasize the need to elicit and raise competence in a limited time, with a limited budget. If the Council had included hard- and software as an allowable expense, it would have needed an exceedingly large budget and a much longer period for the projects to get under way. Despite difficulties or personal expense experienced by some developers, excluding computers or software does not appear to have compromised the results too significantly.

vii. People

Funding for each project was awarded to one or more teachers, to buy their time from teaching. Other human resources (e.g. technicians, IT experts, student assistants) were not funded.

As applicants discovered who had little previous experience developing IT programs, those who work alone must learn several basic skills. Apart from taking advantage of their expertise as language teachers, they may need to learn html scripting (although the newest wordprocessors now include basic html conversion), layout, Web-searching skills, perhaps how to use graphics or other presentation software — even instructional design, since electronic presentation (hypermedia) differs markedly from face-to-face or text-based (linear) presentation.

A more efficient and ultimately cost-effective alternative, but one which was not easy to achieve within the scope of this grant program, is to work in collaboration with colleagues who have these skills already, or are willing to

learn them. Contrary to the rather monastic traditions of many humanists, developing IT projects is best done as a collaborative effort among specialists. As an example, the Russian language project at Uppsala involved the applicant, a colleague who did most of the subject-matter work, a linguist from another department with experience designing IT projects, a graduate student who did much of the input work, and a programmer who designed the software. As a team, they contributed much more time than was allocated; but as a result of the collective effort, their desire to continue with the project is strong. A single developer faced with such demands on time might find it difficult to sustain the enthusiasm.

viii. Systemic considerations

a. Budgets

In general, departments which teach languages have not established a need for teaching equipment — apart perhaps from the period of the 1960s and 70s, when behavioristic psychology and the grammar-translation or the audio-lingual approach to language teaching brought tape-recorder 'language labs' into vogue. Because of this undemanding tradition, and the fact that humanities students are not funded as highly by the central funding formula as students in other disciplines, equipment budgets are a rarity in humanities departments in Sweden. Only very large humanities departments normally might have discretionary funds that could be allocated for that purpose. Otherwise, computers, computing facilities and the staff to run them must be funded from new sources. Consequently, and with significant exceptions (Stockholm and Umeå are two), there is a major difficulty in providing adequate equipment, space and staff to make the use of CALL feasible.

b. Making the case

Acquiring equipment for humanities departments thus usually requires the support of an institution's senior administration. The senior administrators whom this Reviewer met were well aware of, and in principle open to, the opportunities of IT generally. Not all knew of the significant advantages of using IT in the teaching of languages and cultural studies. In order to gain support from the highest levels, teachers involved in IT thus often need to educate the decision-makers. In this, they depend on the support of the middle management (department heads and deans). At several institutions that support was not evident. In other words, if the case for TEL (technology-enhanced learning) in language, literature and cultural studies is to be made successfully, all levels in the decision-making chain must be well-informed.

c. Career implications

At universities and university colleges with a strong research emphasis, there may be implications for the career progress of academics who devote the often considerable amount of time required to develop IT programs for teaching. Although most of the applicants and senior administrators whom I spoke to about it felt that it was not generally a problem at this point, it has become one in other jurisdictions when academics have involved themselves in TEL projects over an extended period. It may be worth ensuring that developers and those who evaluate their career progress agree on the rules of the road at an early stage, to avoid misunderstanding and possible reaction against computer-assisted learning at a future time.

Conclusions

1. Did the short-term grant program achieve its objectives?

Yes. The number of projects funded, the improvement of competence among the applicants, their overall sense of achievement, and, where it was possible to ascertain, the student interest in IT, were all generally positive. Where students did have complaints, it was usually a result of inadequate preparation by the teacher because of lack of time or experience. No instructors expressed the view that they would end their efforts in CALL as a result of their experience.

2. Has the program and the Review revealed systemic budgetary problems?

Finding funding for equipment, facilities, software acquisition and development, and support staff for departments with a very modest tradition of equipment use does require innovative solutions.

3. Has the grant program and the Review revealed pedagogical issues?

Three areas of concern emerged during the Review:

- a) Student-centred teaching. Developing IT programs normally obliges the content expert (usually the instructor) to define the desired learning goals much more specifically than in the face-to-face teaching situation. Because there is normally no live expert present, students using IT programs need to know precisely what is expected of them at each step, and what to do in case of learning difficulties (not to mention technical

difficulties). Developers therefore need to put themselves in the place of the student as they structure their programs. Alternatively, students might 'road-test' the program as it is being created, as happened very successfully with the Finnish project at Stockholm.

- b) Critical thinking, and problem-based learning. Making good use of the Web's resources is primarily a matter of developing good searching skills and a critical approach. In addition, the sheer range and qualitative inconsistency of Web-based information make it a very suitable resource for problem-based learning. One approach is to 'meta-teach' (so that students learn about what and how they are learning). Good examples of this approach are the French/German Web realia projects at Karlstad and Halmstad, where students are to learn how to evaluate the quality of the websites they are learning from.
- c) Curriculum. A related question, but one which is outside the mandate of this Review, is that of curriculum. Based on some of the projects I have reviewed, there seems to be some confusion about the different needs of students of English (who may have had nine years prior learning/experience), and students of other languages (who may have only three or four years learning, and much less ambient exposure to the target language and culture). Additionally, it seems that the grammar-translation approach of the 1950s and 60s, coupled with the audio-lingual 'method' of the 1970s, still have their adherents (visible, for example in projects which drill vocabulary lists, with words out of context). To judge by this circumstantial evidence, there is a need for a review of the curriculum, to clarify the learning that is expected/achieved. A second reason for such a review is the burgeoning, new opportunity offered by the Web and the Internet, which allow learners to engage the culture and the users of target languages more directly than ever before, without going abroad.

4. Has the Review revealed any other opportunities?

A common difficulty for teachers of foreign languages and cultures who live in an uneconomically small publishing market (Sweden and Canada are good examples) is how to find or create course materials that relate the home culture to the target culture. The opportunities for teachers (and learners) to collaborate on the Internet, and to 'publish' course materials on the Web (or otherwise electronically), should encourage Swedish teachers to look at ways of co-developing coursework (e.g. online exercises, grammar-help, data-bases of realia).

5. Has the Review revealed any general technical difficulties?

Several projects used TopClass or FirstClass as their delivery platform. Apart from the limited types of the exercises which they support, the programs themselves are not fully portable. Access is limited to designated users (typically, the students registered in the respective course), working at designated machines or local networks for which licence fees have been paid. This is an inefficient use of scarce resources (computers and student time): it effectively prevents students from working on any other, non-designated computer with Internet access, at any time they choose — for example from home. It also prevents other potential learners from browsing through the program.

Since the time when these projects were funded, other, equally or more flexible and cost-free platforms for Web-based instruction have become available. To name two: LUVIT from Lund University (<http://www.citu.lu.se/luvitedu/vadkanlu.htm>); and Hot Potatoes from the University of Victoria, Canada (<http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/>). Fully interactive access to a course which is based on these platforms can still be restricted to registered students, at source, if that is preferred.

6. Is such a short-term program worth repeating?

In any discipline where pedagogically sound, academically rigorous innovation can be introduced or accelerated, such as those disciplines involved here, yes. If the question relates to CALL, then any 'repetition' should preferably encourage developers to reach for the next level of sophistication — more integration, more collaboration, more quality. The danger of having raised the competence in the first round of grants is that these developers will not find ways (budgets, time, support staff) to continue. As technology evolves, the continuity of their effort is critical.

Part II – Project-by-Project Review

Notes

- Project Numbers are those assigned by the Council.
- Only the Applicant is named. Others often contributed significantly.
- Statements of Aims in italics are as submitted by the Applicants.
- The term 'Distributed Learning' is usually preferred over the more restrictive term 'Distance Education'.
- The term 'A-level' equates to first-semester or Beginning (college) level; 'B-level' equals second-semester or First Intermediate level, etc.
- The word 'institution' is used here in the English sense, to refer to the university or university college as a whole, not the Swedish sense (= 'department')
- 'Basics' (re: Prior IT experience) includes e-mail, word-processing, and some Internet experience (e.g. browsing on the Web).
- Abbreviations are explained on page 80.

Solveig Granath, Karlstad University

Project 001/Ling-97

Aims

Develop IT-support for use in teaching first-term students grammar during Spring 1998. Investigate and test different programs, especially those dealing with corpora. Learn how to create corpus exercises.

Prior experience of IT

SG had previously worked with microfiche, e-mail. No prior knowledge of corpus search programs or concordancers.

Procedure

(Approximately sequence, Summer–Dec. 1997): Consultation with English Dept. colleagues at Stockholm University. (Ljung, Minugh) on corpora, search and concordancers; followed by several weeks identifying and acquiring programs and electronic texts; consulted Magnus Nordenhake (Lund University) re: categorizing e-texts; practised own use; trials with student volunteers; wrote study guides.

Platform/software

Conc 1.70, MicroConcord, Grammar Safari; e-texts on server, CD-ROM and diskettes, or downloaded from Internet.

Time taken

As granted.

Student involvement and reactions

Some students were involved in early trials. Used in A-level class, March 1998 ff, with frequently negative student reactions, due to unfamiliarity

with media, and lack of conviction about the program's usefulness at A-level. Apparently there is need for closer integration with lectures, more precise guidance as to use and expected outcomes (SG).

Additional comments by grantee

The course had not previously been taught by the grantholder. She saw an opportunity to revitalise the grammar portion (3 pts.) with IT, without altering its content in a major way. Her reaction to the experience: enthusiastic about the media; will revise the program and student guides, as a response to student reactions and her own findings; intends to use it or a similar program at higher levels; expects a limited number of colleagues might adopt it or a similar approach, which could provide the basis for a joint grant application in future; sees good opportunities for student research projects at C- and D-level.

Institutional context

a. Equipment

Students had access to two labs (Mac and PC), will have access to two new, larger ones (30 stations each) in Fall 1998.

b. Collegial support

Strong expression of support came from outgoing chairperson, who will continue to work with SG and others in developing a linguistic (as contrasted to a literary) use of corpora. She sees potential for more research into student learning patterns too.

c. Institutional goals

Karlstad's growing involvement in Distributed Learning, especially for teacher-training courses, using regional learning centres and video-conferencing, offers good possibilities for other applications of this type of project.

Reviewer's summary

This was a very well-documented project which shows much promise. Its main goals were: to teach students to how to use grammar as a tool, not as an end in itself; to introduce problem-based learning in the study of

grammar; to deepen the students' understanding of how language works; and to provide students with a skill to encourage their independent interest in further language research. The design, intent and content of the project are fundamentally sound. Student reaction suggests that the problem lies not with the project itself, so much as with the way it is introduced and incorporated into the course. If it can be more fully integrated, it should provide students with a useful tool for independent work, particularly at higher levels. The grantholder is to be commended for her readiness to respond positively to this initial, negative student reaction.

Tawfik Mekki-Berrada, University College of Halmstad

Project 002/Ling-97

Aims

Development of grammar exercises in French, based on earlier work. The exercises are supposed to comment on common mistakes. At the same time, the Applicant will develop a model in which other teachers will be able to make their own examples.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus limited experience with authoring software, such as Macromedia Authorware and Lingus (Swedish courseware authoring program). Some experience creating webpages.

Procedure

Work on more sophisticated aspects of Authorware and design of project began in early Summer 1997. Major development occurred after announcement of grant. First two modules, which were covered by the grant (of five planned eventually), were ready by Dec. 1997, but there was no opportunity to use them with the A-level class until March 1998 ff.

Platform/software

Windows 95, Windows 98, NT, Macintosh. Available on Web, using Shockwave (download button at each entry page): ventax.hh.se/staff/tmb/index.html

Time taken

"Hundreds of hours" (TM-B). Clearly, many more hours than allocated by the grant, both before and after the grant period (PL).

Student involvement and reactions

(Observed in class, and corroborated by students personally to PL in the absence of TM-B.) Students found the program very useful for reinforcing learning and as a remedial tool while preparing written work. They appreciated the context-sensitive help and the humor, had minor criticisms on feedback sounds [which have since been fixed. PL].

Additional comments by grantee

The purpose in developing this program was to create grammar and skill-based exercises to assist students of very mixed/weak background in French grammar, by encouraging them to improve their answers, based on helpful information on wrong answers. Score-keeping and close attention to good presentation (uncluttered screen layout, graphics, sound) are additional positive features.

Institutional context

Strong departmental support for IT; good, but limited computer lab facilities.

Reviewer's summary

Three modules were demonstrated (listening comprehension, dictée and discrete grammar diagnostics). A fourth focuses on reading comprehension. All are available via the Web. Brief introductory remarks and general Help are in Swedish; otherwise, the instructions are in French. All modules reflect the author's eye for visual presentation, pedagogics and varied types of exercises. The use of sight, sound and the requirement for students to respond quite actively are very positive aspects, too.

Minor suggestions: being able to return to the respective menu within the grammar exercise group would give students greater navigational freedom; and there are a small number of minor bugs (spelling, incorrect feedback, incomplete glossary in Reading comprehension, despite its claim to be comprehensive).

Overall, this was one of the very best projects of this kind which were funded in this round, albeit one which resulted from many more hours of work than envisaged by the Council. It would serve as a good model for others considering similar basic, skill-based or cognitive exercises in any language.

Gunnar Bergh, Gothenburg University

Project 003/Ling-97

Aims

Vocabulary exercises on the Net, with automatic correction for immediate feedback.

Prior experience of IT

Good knowledge of West/TopClass — coursework delivery, management and communications package.

Procedure

Conceived as part of a larger English writing course (within DUKOM Distance Learning Network), the portion funded by the Council was designed by late Oct. 1997. From Nov.–Dec. 1997, grantee selected words to be tested, based on Cobuild frequency, and devised Swedish distractors for multiple-choice exercises. Colleague in Spanish entered data into TopClass. First student use: mid-Feb. 1998 ff.

Platform/software

TopClass (<http://eng115.eng.gu.se/TopClass/>), webstar. Log in Vocabulary Bank, Username: "Vocabulary", Password: "Bank".

Time taken

"Appropriate" (GB).

Student involvement and reactions

Mid-Feb. 1998 ff. 20 students in Gothenburg and 20 in Sussex began the overall course of which this project is part. Course was to be evaluated in late May, but this (self-study, self-paced) portion will not be monitored due to lack of time ("unfortunately". GB).

Additional comments by grantee

Designed to aid with standard tests of English vocabulary, primarily for A-level students of English writing, this project will also be usable at B- and C-levels, for grammar review, vocabulary-building, and improving awareness of usage. At the end of the funded time, the overall project (incl. the Council-funded portion) will not be developed further, but will remain available for student use. Access will be restricted to registered students only. A majority (2/3) of students favor use of IT in GB's courses generally.

The IT-literacy of incoming students is patchy, not as high as often assumed. [Improving the IT competence of their teachers is a problem which the University is attempting to alleviate through the Board of Teacher Education (LUN, the IT representatives for each Faculty), and closer co-operation with the Mölndal Teacher Training College. PL]

Institutional context

[These comments derive from a meeting with several department representatives, including the Head, and individual meetings with grantees. PL]

At Faculty level, there is a generally favorable view of CAL; at the departmental level, less so. The Department of English does not appear to have embraced IT in teaching and learning to the extent that some other university English departments in Sweden have. Research use of IT, on the other hand — especially corpora, work with e-texts, translation and databases — is very active (but was not part of this Review), and those resources "can also be used for teaching". In fact, they rarely are, at the undergraduate level.

Lack of funding was said to be a major reason for the relatively low profile of CAL in the department. Uneven commitment is clearly another. Two seminars had been given by visiting experts by the time of this Review; and there are some individual members of the department who are and have been significantly involved in using and developing CAL material. Without an overall departmental context of support, however, this commitment is prone to waver.

On the practical level, one IT-ansvarige is available for only 30 percent time, and was concentrating discretionary time on graduate students. Computer facilities (four rooms of 15–20 stations each) for undergraduates are not adequate even for current demand, for A-level corpus work,

grammar, Web use, and some C- and D-level research. The proposed new facilities may not alleviate the situation much, because they may be shared by other, new users.

Reviewer's summary

This is a straightforward series of bare-bones, multiple-choice vocabulary exercises, built into a TopClass delivery platform (which includes e-mail access to instructor, postings of resource information, score-keeping). Each level of exercises tests 100 words. Most of the words being tested are devoid of context. Response to wrong answers is a message to try again. There is no error analysis.

As with other TopClass projects, access is restricted to registered students or by special arrangement with the instructor. This is unfortunate: vocabulary drills such as this have potential value for all Swedish learners of English at this level, under the current curricula.

Per Simfors, Mid-Sweden University College

Project 004/Ling-97

Aims

Create a website for the B-course, primarily for translation exercises (Swedish-German), create a large set of examples.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus experience with Excel; none with html.

Procedure

PS began learning html in August 1997 from books and Web, but potential server problems and probable need to learn Java made TopClass a preferable option

Platform/software

TopClass residing on local server.

Time taken

Longer than funded, largely because of the extent of initial technical research.

Student involvement and reactions

None during development (the B-level course was not given at that period). There was little chance to try the project out with students before this Review, because of syllabus and very small class size. Students who have used it (since Jan.) found it too picky, because of right/wrong inflexibility (i.e. not even minor errors go unnoticed). PS finds this criticism unjustified, since correctness is the point, and major errors are identified, too.

Additional comments by grantee

This Internet-based program aimed originally to prepare students who are studying abroad for the translation section of national examinations, which has a low success rate. The B-level lang/lit/culture course subsequently appeared more suitable for initial development of this 3-pt. unit (which is only taught on the Internet, not in class). Contrastive approach is used throughout. Using an interactive platform also enables more personalized instruction than would be possible in class-time. Source and student texts are on-screen together. Translation texts are made available to students in sequence, approximately once each week. E-mail access to instructor and other students, and bulletin-boards are also built into TopClass.

Student IT-competence is said to be problematical — particularly where one-to-one matching of spelling, syntax and vocabulary is required, as here.

PS wants to expand the program with more texts, more variety, more grammar components. He would like to make it available to A- and C-level students.

Institutional context

As a multi-campus institution, Mid-Sweden University College is strongly committed to Distributed (or 'Flexible') Learning. As an example, 60 percent of teacher training courses now have an IT component (80 percent is projected). English language (especially LSP — Language for Special Purposes) courses are similarly strongly committed to IT. There is some interest in the format of this project among colleagues teaching other languages. Student computer access is adequate.

Reviewer's summary

This useful project consists so far of a) a bank of, at the time of review, six short texts for "autocorrected" translation, with clickable hints on predicted points of difficulty, and a model answer for those who need more help before the final copy is submitted to the instructor; and b) grammar exercises drilling verbs, adjectives, etc. Drills on syntax would also be possible on this platform.

Access is restricted by the TopClass platform to registered students, or those provided with password by PS. Given the self-correcting nature of this compact program, and its evident value for practising a skill which is less well taught in books, there seems to be good reason for considering giving (non-interactive) open access to students elsewhere.

Birgitta Berglund-Nilsson, Karlstad University

Project 005/Ling-97

Aims

Improve the [French/German] teachers' ability to search and use different Internet sources, (Criticism of sources, Academic value).

Prior experience of IT

Experienced Web user; had previously developed a multimedia French literature program. BB-N took an html course, and had much help from family and a knowledgeable colleague in French (Jacques Ferrat).

Procedure

June 1997 ff. assembly of a database of useful French and German lang/lit/cultural websites began, and sites on integrating IT in teaching. Site designed, with a core of useful sites and critical commentaries completed by Dec. 1997.

Platform/software

<http://www.kau.se/inst/hum/franska/SiteWeb/Main.html>

Time taken

More, and involving the time of more people than granted.

Student involvement and reactions

(French only; German not yet available) Students critiqued the French site in Fall 1997, asked for more variety. Reaction was "very positive".

Additional comments by grantee

The strategic goal was to incorporate IT into non-English second language courses, in order to raise and stabilize student interest. The goal of this

project was to create critical entry pages to selected thematically grouped website resources, in order to encourage students to approach future research in the same critical spirit. Secondary goal (not yet achieved at time of review) was to teach students how to create and integrate Web-based IT in their own teaching (the majority of students are teacher trainees).

Institutional context

Strong Distance Learning commitment at Karlstad, the Faculty's strength in media and communications, and the fact that there is a high proportion of teacher trainees in courses served by this project is a potentially fruitful combination. The former Department Head expressed strong support of IT during the Review, but technical help is not readily available. There is no IT-ansvarig in the department; and prospects are not good that one will be budgeted, either partially or full-time. This is considered a major obstacle to further development of IT-based learning.

Reviewer's summary

The approach—emphasizing critical approaches to Web-based cultural resources for students—distinguishes this project as academically sound and essentially humanistic. Rather than merely providing one more jump page of useful resources for French or German students (of which there are already dozens online), the project aims to teach the critical skills that will serve students in other spheres and times of their lives.

The site is organized hierarchically, and includes introductory remarks to each succeeding level. Thematic buttons to groups of links to sites elsewhere are: La France; Enseignements; Institutions; Médias; Littérature; Utilitaires; Divers, and an e-mail link to the teacher. Not all groups were (are yet) developed by the end of the project. If more fully developed, with more of the criteria for evaluating the linked sites contained on the Karlstad webpages, this would be a valuable contribution to teaching Web-usage in the humanities elsewhere, as well as a useful tool for local courses.

Some minor technical comments: the opening (default) page of French scenes is colorful and detailed, but can therefore be very slow to download; the theme-buttons at the bottom of the page are rather cramped, and would in any case be better placed at the side of the page, for quicker linking, rather than the user having to scroll down to the bottom each time.

Christoph Röcklinsberg, Linköping University

Project 011/Ling-97

Aims

Create a local website for German realia studies with links to relevant sites.

Prior experience of IT

Very little, except word-processing.

Procedure

CR began by learning websearch techniques, then created a catalogue of useful sites and learnt how to assemble them into a jumpsite, using html.

Platform/software

Available at: <http://www.liu.se/isk/ty/deutschs.html>

Time taken

Was very adequate for the project.

Student involvement and reactions

Project was too recently introduced to allow for much student reaction. A few resisted using the medium, others are "uncritical and easily satisfied after only short searches".

Additional comments by grantee

Originally conceived as part of a larger, collaborative, departmental project which did not materialize, this project aims to provide students of A-level German courses for general, business, and legal purposes with: access to sources of topical information; closer contact with the authentic language;

and greater learner autonomy. At the time of submitting the grant application, there were no equivalent sites in Sweden. The students are reminded always to use print sources as well.

CR found learning html "surprisingly easy" (self-taught, with some outside instruction).

Initial student reactions (above), suggest a need to introduce more web-use pedagogy, specifically: to teach students a) practically, how to use the technology — rather than just exhorting them to use it; b) to be more critical of the resource; and c) to develop a critical overview of their subject— instead of grasping at details and figures. Although CR is keen to continue, further development of the pedagogics and the actual contents of the site will depend on availability of time-release from teaching duties.

CR cites the following positive results: increased topicality; more "lively" student papers; improved attitudes to German language study; greater accuracy in citing supporting details in papers.

Institutional context

At Linköping, English has a history of using technology in some of its courses, other languages less so. Since the majority of German language courses at Linköping are service courses for students of law, business and other professions, the resource needs are highly pragmatic. There appears to be room for closer cooperation between the servicing and 'served' departments on the question of IT use in courses, with much potential for improving the students' critical abilities in the use of IT (and for finding development funding?).

Reviewer's summary

This project consists of jumpsites to resources on each of four German-speaking countries. At each jumpsite, the resources are grouped under nine themes (four in the case of Liechtenstein), related to the needs of the respective courses: geography, law, business, etc. The pages are all in German, the language of instruction in the lecture classes.

As the comments above indicate, the grantee recognizes the need to encourage a more critical approach to the resources. In the Reviewer's opinion this is an urgent consideration if/when further development funding is being sought. Critical thinking is an essential skill for successful use of the WWW (cf. first paragraph of this section under Project 005).

Birgitta Almgren, Örebro University

Project 013/Ling-97

Aims

Using First Class for creative writing. Create methods of developing students' text production from informal to formal academic and professional writing (essays, compositions, summaries and commentaries, applications, commercial correspondence, translations and so on). Create model texts and learning materials accessible for the students in folders in the computer conference.

Store written instructions to help students improve own writing strategies: transform own materials, download selected texts from Internet online and navigate through the learning materials in the computer conference. Emphasis is placed on analysis and creative text production. The pedagogy is based on dialogue and interaction between the tutor and the participants in writing processes in the computer conference.

[More detail is at: <http://www.hoe.se/org/inst/hum/tyska/tysknat3.html>]

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus course on Distributed Learning at Örebro University, introduction to First Class and video-conferencing.

Procedure

Summer 1997 ff. BA did background research into available programs to improve student skills with IT. Sept. 1997 ff. she identified texts ("modern, simple and good") for use in the project, and wrote a student handbook to accompany texts and exercises.

Platform/software

FirstClass.

Time taken

The time funded was used for development of program. All preceding background research and working with students was extra to that time.

Student involvement and reactions

Used at A- and B-level (eventually also C-level). "[T]he emotional involvement was astonishing and unexpectedly strong to me and my students" (BA). BA also felt that it would be more informative, and instructive for the future of this project, to have more specific reactions from the students.

Additional comments by grantee

The quality of student writing needed improvement, and IT showed promise of being able to demonstrate good quality as well as achieve more personalized instruction. The program augments, does not replace classroom teaching. The online portion consists of: electronic files giving assistance and exercises on Internet usage, translation, and text-writing; model texts with explanatory commentaries; conferencing; bulletin board, and e-mail. Support material includes an extensive print handbook. The approach is analytical/creative, involving students in online research, project discussion and re-drafting.

Students are guaranteed a reply within 24 hrs. Using the program has involved more work for the instructor, but this may be due to using both IT and traditional approaches concurrently.

The project has been presented locally and was to be again at a national conference (May 1998). There is some interest in using the project among colleagues in Swedish. The major drawback of using FirstClass is its restricted availability and licensing cost, which limits users to specified machines.

Institutional context

IT had not played a significant role in delivering course materials in the humanities prior to this project. The project is seen by the Head of

Department as a "role model" for discussing the introduction of IT into other humanities courses. Computer access for students in the humanities has been relatively poor (20 PCs, 10 Macs), but should improve significantly with the new facilities. Obtaining adequate support for development and maintenance of course-related webpages is seen as problematical in future.

Reviewer's summary

This is a very well-designed, thoroughly documented project, containing examples and exercises to improve various styles of writing. It is supported by large amounts of online help for students, written in a concise, readable form (Swedish and German). The approach to using Web-based resources is healthily critical. There are well-conceived plans for further development which, however, are quite dependent on further funding.

There is a clear potential for such a project to be offered eventually as an independent course, through Distributed Learning technologies.

Ulla Birgegård, Uppsala University

Project 015/Ling-97

Aims

IT-based course with exercises in basic Russian grammar. In co-operation with the Department of Computer Linguistics.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, but found well-qualified, highly motivated help from Linguistics Dept. staff and graduate students, and in her own Dept. re: project planning, development and execution.

Procedure

June 1997 ff. The group did background research into media, authoring programs, and chose to use Internet (cf. Council "portability" requirement). Multiple participants worked in parallel, respectively designing the program, developing CATCH software, creating Russian grammar exercises, converting exercises into Javascript (Sept.–Dec. 1997/Jan. 1998).

Platform/software

CATCH authoring program custom written in Perl. Web access at:
<http://stp.ling.uu.se/call/russian/english.html>

Time taken

Two hundred and fifty + hours (all contributors). Unexpected amount of preparatory research consumed many hours before the project could be planned in detail.

Student involvement and reactions

The program was available for students from Jan. 1998. Main page visited ca 2 000 times by late April — external hits; internal hits not available. Other reactions not available at time of review.

Additional comments by grantee

The program addresses a need to ensure basic grammatical competence among new and in-service learners. Current print texts for Swedish learners are outdated and provide poor motivation. Pedagogically, this program focuses on Swedish learner problems and error-analysis (possible research subject-matter). For practical reasons (time constraint, learner needs), the program deals primarily with morphology, although a more ambitious project was/is planned.

Institutional context

There is strong IT experience in Linguistics and English Depts., both research-oriented and in teaching (especially graduate and teacher training). The new building will have five IT workrooms, but clearly predictable access problems as usage grows (they will be shared by nine languages depts. — i.e. ca 2 000 students). Current incoming undergraduate IT literacy is described as low (English Dept.).

Uppsala University is no longer committed to Distance Education as a priority (poor financial return, and students tended to be local, not distant). Practical, quick IT support is reported as being very poor, taking days or even weeks.

Reviewer's summary

This program is a series of 154 basic, highly cognitive drill exercises, predominantly gap-fill and transformations. There are plans to develop the program further, with more (varied?) exercises and help in Russian grammar, linguistics, vocabulary, phonetics. These plans are entirely dependent on funding.

Comparable programs exist elsewhere for anglophone learners as desktop packages (e.g. *Russian Alive!*) or as partially Web-based textbook courses (e.g. *Golosa*). None exist for Swedish learners. Likewise, there are authoring packages specifically for generating language-learning exercises, which support cyrillic script (Callgen, which is freeware, and WinCALIS), but neither is Web-usable (WebCALIS is coming closer). The team at Uppsala was therefore obliged to develop its own software (CATCH) and create its own exercises. Presumably, their software will be of great interest to others interested in developing cyrillic-script Internet exercises.

Hans Lindquist, Växjö University

Project 016/Ling-97

Aims

Grammar. The use of IT in a problem-based teaching of corpus, develop a web-site where students can practise corpus as well as grammar in general.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus experienced corpus-user.

Procedure

The program was developed over Summer–Fall 1997. David Minugh (Stockholm University) gave some advice in the formative stages.

Platform/software

Telnet or CD-based corpora (incl. some with built-in search mechanisms); standard Web browsers, like Alta Vista.

Time taken

”About right for the amount achieved.”

Student involvement and reactions

Early course evaluations (the course did not begin until the end of March 1998) ”filed but not compiled” i.e. not available at review time.

Additional comments by grantee

Initially focussing on encouraging B-level student use of corpora (e.g. Cobuild), the project expanded to include use of the Web as a corpus. This latter use is promising, and is worth further exploration. Students have user-id access to Cobuild, and can telnet in from any Internet-linked computer. They are grouped in 4s, to exploit group dynamic and intra-group IT-

tutoring. They are assigned fixed-corpus or Web-based projects on English usage, and report results in class. Web-searches are more difficult with current browsers, and require instruction (one two-hour, in-class demonstration and handout). A useful-sounding course webpage was planned, but is not yet available. HL sees much potential in using the Web as "an enormous corpus".

Institutional context

The IT plan for Växjö University calls for IT to be fully integrated into instruction by the year 2000. Student computer access on campus is still quite limited by the low number and power of available computers; increasingly, students have their own machines and tutor one another (e.g. a supplementary course on IT competence attracted no registrants).

The Humanities Dept. has paid for html course for its IT specialists, and has technical support of 50 percent of the IT-ansvarige's time; students share existing, but under-equipped labs with other depts. The webpage course and departmental information for students is good, and improving.

The English section has been/is involved in European projects SWELT (Swedish English Language Training for business), IAL, and GramTime research project into trends in modern English (qv. at: www.vxu.se/hum/engelska/gramtime/). The Council-funded project relates undergraduate instruction to some aspects of GramTime.

Reviewer's summary

There is a generally very favorable and highly productive nucleus of IT work in the Humanities Dept. at Växjö. Money for development time, and assessment of the effectiveness of IT are perceived as the biggest obstacles to further progress (other than the ubiquitous plea for more, and more powerful computers).

This English corpus project is quite similar to work at Stockholm University, in that it encourages students to explore features of modern English usage to reinforce their sense of linguistic change vs. grammar 'rules'. Its value lies in encouraging exploratory learning and precise research within well-defined boundaries.

If the course page is to be realized as conceived, it might be helpful to have it reside on a platform such as LUVIT, to enable more interactivity within and between the student groups (and instructor) outside of class time.

Monica Bjurman, University College of Mälardalen

Project 017/Ling-97

Aims

Solve the problems of writing essays. Students tend to spend too long writing them and too many never finish. IT is to be used for tutoring and teaching. The students are also going to learn how to use different IT-based tools in order to be better prepared for essay writing.

Prior experience of IT

Basics; no corpus work, or knowledge of databases.

Procedure

May-June 1997: with no local academic or technical help available, and as the only linguist in her dept., MB sought help from Jan Svartvik (Lund University), Hans Lindquist (Växjö University) on Cobuild et al., and from the manager of the Helsinki corpus. She had previous funding for buying/ subscribing to corpora, which were acquired following these discussions, and incorporated into the Council project via a short student guide to their use (written in Fall 1997) .

Platform/software

CobuildDirect.

Time taken

As funded. The project was already evolving at the time of the grants.

Student involvement and reactions

Not able to be used in class until Fall 1998, the project is designed to help C-level students prepare better for their 10-pt. essay, and other C- and D-level research. The same corpora may also be used by students of literature. Students will use eight computers linked to the Cobuild database.

Additional comments by grantee

Corpus work was previously not done at Mälardalen. This project is intended to accelerate research for, and improve the quality of C-level papers. It was demonstrated to colleagues in Feb. 1998, and aroused high interest; will form the basis of a D-level student research paper. MB intends introducing concordancing and corpora at B-level, based on eventual experience with C-level.

The student guide to using corpora was necessitated by how little time students had for essay-writing, and their need to learn to use the new tool fast.

Institutional context

The Library has few print resources, but (therefore) has a strong interest in supporting electronic learning resources, for example by providing online searches of resources elsewhere. It is encouraging creation of course webpages, which are the responsibility of the departments (but which were not apparently much developed at the time of this review).

The impression was that, despite a significant institutional commitment to Distributed Learning [see Project 040], the humanities depts. are in the very early stages of implementing a general IT strategy. There was little evidence of technology transfer between humanists and those responsible for Distributed Learning, even though they were in the same building.

Reviewer's summary

The tangible 'product' of this project consists primarily of the "Student Guide to Corpus-based Studies", a six-page, printed pamphlet which explains what corpora and concordances are, and some typical uses. As a concise, general description, it would be useful information to provide as a webpage, for other users.

Behind the Guide there presumably lies the planning and design of a (for this institution) new approach to undergraduate writing and research. The value of the project will be determined once it has been used and evaluated for consideration for other courses.

The instructor has relied on more experienced colleagues elsewhere for advice. It is to be hoped that she will continue to work closely with them as the project matures—in particular, to explore more specific tasks to encourage students' independent research.

Arne Olofsson, Gothenburg University

Project 018/Ling-97

Aims

Grammatical support for language students. Specifically to expand a list of terms and definitions with cross-references and to show the material on a website.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus some knowledge of html.

Procedure

Based on an earlier cross-referenced (print) Latin grammar by the author, pre-computer design for this project was completed by Oct. 1997; the project itself was essentially completed by early Jan. 1998.

Platform/software

Constructed with MSWord 97 html conversion. Web accessible at:
<http://www.eng.gu.se/-engwww/sv/projects/GrUp/index.html>

Time taken

”Much more” than the 250 hours funded, largely because of the need to learn/implement technical details, since no technical help was funded, or available within the department.

Student involvement and reactions

Designed for A-level Swedish students of the basic English grammar course, and learners of other languages, the project was made available to students in March 1998 ff. and publicized to colleagues via two demos and the Humanities newsletter. Only ca 20 percent of 140 A-level students had used

it after three weeks. Reasons given in the student survey: insufficient machines; poor IT skills; the project was not ready for listing in course literature distributed in Oct. 1997. No technical problems in delivery.

Additional comments by grantee

[See also extended description in Swedish at: http://www.hum.gu.se/~engwww/sv/projects/GrUp/GrUp_beskr.html]

The project grew out of dissatisfaction with the results of book-based learning of grammar terminology. It contains ca 250 clickable and cross-referenced terms, elementary parsing/syntax help, and an extensive bibliography. Opportunity for online comments and questions from students is little used. Future iterations might include an English-language version for B-level, and a contrastive section on Swedish-English grammar usage.

Institutional context

[See Project 003]

Reviewer's summary

This project addresses a very common problem among second-language learners, many of whom do not know the terminology or grammar of their native language. The program is clearly-structured, very straightforward (e.g. no fancy graphics to delay downloading) and very usable. It deserves to be much more widely used, for example through links from other A-level courses at other institutions.

Elisabeth Wåghäll & Bärbel Westphal, Växjö University

Project 019/Ling-97

Aims

Create a local website for German studies with links, primarily related to culture and literature.

Prior experience of IT

The grantees had prior experience of common IT functions and websearch techniques, had also created multimedia projects, and took html and graphics/frames courses.

Procedure

Began work on paper model of project in late Summer 1997, converted it to the website in late Fall semester. Web access was enabled in Jan. 1998.

Platform/software

The text was created in MSWord 8. German course pages are at:

<http://www.vxu.se/hum/tyska/index.html>

The lit/cultural studies jumpsite is at: [...tyska/links.html](http://www.vxu.se/hum/tyska/links.html)

Time taken

More than granted, primarily because of the need to do their own html conversion.

Student involvement and reactions

Course evaluations could not refer to the links project, since it became available too late for inclusion. Anecdotal reports on the link-site were

positive on its self-study aspects and opening access to new sources which were not available in the campus library. Online availability of course outlines was also appreciated.

Additional comments by grantee

EW is enthusiastic at the initial responses, intends to continue developing more course-related sites. They will have special value for students during their year abroad, too.

Institutional context

[See Project 016]

Reviewer's summary

This project belongs within the overall goal of providing German students at Växjö with useful formal information and supporting materials for class projects. That currently includes course descriptions, bibliographies, focus-questions, charts of cultural and literary epochs, and hotlinks to other WWW sites of use to undergraduates.

The linksite which is at the heart of the Council-funded project is organized by types of information sources (libraries, government, press, pedagogics, language, literature etc.). Similar sites have become relatively common (several are linked from this site, for example). They usually require a firm instructional hand to make the information relevant to local students, and above all to teach them to approach the information mass in a focussed, critical manner ("how to draw knowledge from information"). Providing such a framework online would be a valuable contribution in any future development.

Eva Larsson Ringqvist,
Växjö University
Project 021/Ling-97

Aims

Create a website with administrative information, an outline in French of the different parts of the course, links to a translation to Swedish of grammatical terms and to a guide to further reading of a French grammar book.

Prior experience of IT

Limited amount of the basics; took an eight-hour html course offered through the Humanities Dept.

Procedure

N/A.

Platform/software

Text converted for Web via AOL's html converter.
[URL: <http://www.vxu.se/hum/franska/fra/gram/>]

Time taken

Appropriate. Student help with Javascripting was additional.

Student involvement and reactions

The project had not yet been used by students at time of the Review. The aim of the online portion was to emulate the in-class approach where possible, hence reduce the unfamiliarity of the new medium. ELR anticipates high usage.

Additional comments by grantee

The aim was to provide mixed-ability A-level students with the basis for reaching a more common standard. Unlike book grammars, the approach emphasizes differences between Swedish and French grammar, and thinking about grammar. The site consists of three types of links: to terminological explanations, examples, and to open-ended questions about grammar. A small diagnostic test with help functions is largely for incoming students to identify ability-levels. They are then referred to André Kahlmann's Frida program (Stockholm University.). It would be advantageous if the link to Frida could be online, too.

If it were to be developed further, the project would preferably include interactivity with students, links to authentic sources, and a concordancer, so that students could discover their own examples.

Institutional context

[See Project 016]

Reviewer's summary

This project consists of a homepage linking to sub-pages in Swedish on: course materials (print and electronic); verb morphology, auxiliaries, tenses and other descriptive pages on grammatical/syntactical topics; a brief, contrastive explanation of various grammatical terms. Each page includes one or more focus-questions and learning tips.

This is a well laid-out, succinct and very useful tool for Swedish students of French — highly suitable for linking to other French programs elsewhere in Sweden.

Karin Måhlèn-Nilsson, Växjö University

Project 022/Ling-97

Aims

Create a website for a course in European Studies, one of the components within "English for Specific Purposes".

Prior experience of IT

"Not much, and I thought [beforehand that] I was too old to learn." KM-N had not used the Web before; took the html course (see Project 016).

Procedure

Summer–Fall 1997: research into existing courses, links and media, followed in Fall–winter 1997 by pedagogical design, and, with a student programmer's assistance, layout design and implementation.

Platform/software

URL: <http://www.vxu.se/hum/engelska/eu/>

Time taken

More than funded, largely because of longer-than-anticipated preliminary research and html work (see below).

Student involvement and reactions

Not yet used in class at the time of review.

Additional comments by grantee

KM-N found the html course too sophisticated for her actual needs, given that she had student assistance (a Media/Computer Science student funded by the University.). She views the site as experimental, subject to revision once students have used it.

The goal is to provide students of the International Administration with Language study (IAL) courses with links to the latest information on EU history, issues and structures, especially as they affect Sweden. A secondary goal is to familiarize with the bureaucratic language and discourse of the EU.

Students have previously (before the creation of this site) had great difficulty finding current EU information. They will be given in-class instruction on Web-searching, do independent research, and produce papers in one of three target languages on a particular EU country's relations with Sweden and the Union. This section is worth 2–3 pts., at B-level.

Institutional context

[See Project 016]

Reviewer's summary

This is a visually and technically well-designed site. After an introductory page (in Swedish) on the value of the Web for the course, there are links to EU sites (which are in English), explaining the EU's history by periods, giving official information on the respective members and applicants via a 'hot' EU map, and describing the structure of the EU. A general page provides (in English and Swedish) links to a dozen sites of official documents and other data on the EU and Sweden.

As a 'work-in-progress', this site has most value in presenting relatively narrowly-focussed, rapid access to a limited number of sites. As students react to it, it may be expected to become even more focused, and, it is to be hoped, include the instructor's guide to its use in the class (and perhaps even a glossary of 'Euro-terminology?'). The IAL courses are apparently unique, but the pages should be of interest to any Swedish student of European relations.

Mats Johansson, University College of Halmstad

Project 028/Ling-97

Aims

To survey and buy useful concordance programs and corpus material. Aim is to give students tools to do most of the text processing in vocabulary training on their own. Evaluation of method and results.

Prior experience of IT

MJ has long experience of basics, websearching, and (more recently) Cobuild corpus. He was able to help other Council-funded colleagues with html.

Procedure

Summer 1997, tested various corpora and concordancers, and designed the project.

Platform/software

Cobuild and Wordsmith concordancer.

Time taken

More than allocated.

Student involvement and reactions

This project was very well documented. Students (70, A-level) were involved from the start, and aware of the experimental nature of the corpus portion. There was some negative reaction initially by one group (of the two) against the emphasis on independent research (students expected the teacher to lecture and provide examples for them, rather than their finding their own).

Comparisons of vocabulary improvement with earlier (non-IT) classes were inconclusive or negative, except for significant improvement among low-achieving students. Teacher training students moving on to the B-level course have requested continuation of the project there, and more IT in other respects too. Some students reported already using their new corpus skills in other classes.

Additional comments by grantee

This (3-pt.) section of the course involves vocabulary work. Students begin with traditional resources (print dictionaries etc.) before being introduced to electronic ones. Each of eight student project-groups included one (trained) volunteer IT person, to instruct the group in using the corpus via telnet. This worked well, on the whole. The quality of student project-work and independent research abilities improved markedly with time (to the instructor's partial dismay, as he spent more time responding to technical questions than academic ones as students became comfortable with the methodology).

MJ was disappointed by the lack of more positive post-test results, which he ascribes partly to a discrepancy between the vocabulary of the textbook and that of the corpus research projects. He intends to continue, using non-IT control groups, even more student involvement in planning, a more closely-matched test, and more consideration to how IT is introduced into the course.

Institutional context

Students were frustrated by frequent interruptions to Internet connections (infrastructure problems are said to be "common" at Halmstad). Few other colleagues have an interest in corpus work.

Reviewer's summary

As with similar projects elsewhere which first introduced corpus work to their institution, initial success depends largely on how students are introduced to it. Once they become familiar, reactions tend to improve. Whether achievement does, it is too early to say.

MJ is to be commended for his conscientious effort, his sensitivity to his students' needs, and his intention to continue the experiment until its true value (devoid of technical or non-academic obstacles) can be assessed.

Britt-Marie Ek, Lund University

Project 029/Ling-97

Aims

To create a shell and add German grammar exercises to it.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus a course on (Visual/) Basic.

Procedure

June 1997 — Jan. 1998: learning the authoring package, and designing and programming the project

Platform/software

Visual Basic for Windows 3.11/Windows 95. Download from:
<http://www.hgur.se/lingcal/Ek/> (the program only works on Windows).

Time taken

As allocated, but B-ME was only able to create the shell and approximately half of the planned sections in the time, mainly because she had no assistance in programming.

Student involvement and reactions

Students present at this Review were positive, had made suggestions for further improvements, and would continue to use it.

Additional comments by grantee

This project addresses problems caused by incoming students' poor knowledge of grammar, which causes them difficulties in A- and B-level German courses. B-ME intends to continue working on the project, in her own time if need be.

Institutional context

Lund has a strong policy of supporting IT in teaching, reinforced by assistance available at CITU (Centrum för informationsteknik i utbildningen). Student access to computers is quite restricted, however, as elsewhere.

Reviewer's summary

This program teaches and drills German syntax and basic grammar forms (gender, subject, object, auxiliary verbs, adjectival agreement, active/passive transformations). It is designed for independent use. When complete, it will contain more 'teaching', more examples, greater navigational flexibility, score-keeping, error review/retry, and context-sensitive help in response to incorrect (mostly fill-in-the-blank or jumbled-sentence) answers.

The lack of outside assistance reduced the amount of actual exercises and features that were completed in the time allocated. Nevertheless, the shell exists, as well as several exercises and a clearly-conceived overall design. Its present form is quite usable, with clear instructions (in Swedish) for the user. It is to be hoped that the project can be completed as designed (and also made available to non-Windows users!)

Inez Müller, University College of Halmstad

Project 030/Ling-97

Aims

Internet for German literature, test and develop a model for integration of Internet by using existing sources.

Prior experience of IT

Basics.

Procedure

Summer–Fall 1997: Web research to identify suitable sites for B- and C-level students' needs; discussion with colleagues on their needs in preparing A-level students for essay-writing. IM attended one helpful session on Web-use at an international German teachers' meeting (Aug. 1997), and learnt html from a colleague. Skeleton of the page was ready by Feb. 1998.

Platform/software

URL of hotlinks site: <http://www.hh.se/staff/inmu/index.html>

Time taken

Slightly longer than granted.

Student involvement and reactions

The webpage (as opposed to a paper list of websites) first became available to the B-level class at the time of this Review. The Reviewer attended a student lab where it was used for the second time. Reactions were generally positive; no technical difficulties.

Additional comments by grantee

IM has written an academic paper in German (published online by the Internationaler Deutschlehrerverband — IDV: <http://www-ecd.let.uu.nl/idv-magazine/>), describing the status among Germanists of Internet-based research and the specifics of using this project to integrate the Internet into German courses at Halmstad. Among other details, it describes the resources, as well as the use to which they are put.

Institutional context

Students have access to humanities computer labs, which are in high demand. Infrastructure problems cause occasional disruptions in connecting to the Internet.

Reviewer's summary

The purpose of the project was to provide Internet resources for the three levels of German courses at Halmstad. The use of the resource is carefully introduced in stages, from seeking specific information ('treasure-hunt'), to comparing information sources, use of search machines, and, ultimately, independent research. Key to usage is the instructor's in-class guidance, which encourages a critical approach to sources. If this meta-teaching were incorporated into the webpage¹, it would add a vital dimension to what is otherwise simply a list of carefully selected hotlinks grouped under headings (on-ramp to the highway, study areas, German lit. on the Internet, search machines, study assistance — e.g. on essay-writing, online dictionary).

IM's article (above) is a valuable case-study on the practicalities of linking classroom study and Internet resources.

¹ I understand that the webpages have recently been amended, with these suggestions in mind. PL.

Philippe Grampeix, Umeå University

Project 031/Ling-97

Aims

Distance Education in French. The use of Internet for improving students knowledge of the Francophone parts of the world.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus experience of creating webpages, multimedia use, corpus research, A/V editing, and didacticising authentic materials. PG does not consider himself expert, nonetheless.

Procedure

After extensive correspondence with colleagues on relevant professional listservs (Summer 1997), PG collected and classified websites, an extensive image bank, his own large collection of A/V materials, and selected excerpts of documents. Sept. to Dec. 1997: he wrote the student guidelines for group and mini-projects, and "gave a sharper pedagogical focus to [his] use of media in this course." Following the Council's deadline, he continued to assemble useful links and information for students on teaching French using media.

Platform/software

Created with MS Word 5 and Visual Page, also uses .gif and JPeg files. At the time of the Review the program was stored on a hard drive and individual diskettes. Copyright inhibits giving more general access — e.g. via the Web — to some files (cf. the Council's guidelines to grant applicants).

Time taken

Significantly more than allocated (three months and continuing. Two months were funded).

Student involvement and reactions

Not available at time of review.

Additional comments by grantee

This project is for B-level, to give students guided access to useful French information sites on the Internet and on locally-stored files. Previously, students wrote papers on aspects of French culture while studying abroad. This is virtually no longer possible at this level, so papers and 'mini-projects' are now written in Umeå, requiring locally accessible resources. Most of the students are teacher trainees, hence research and oral/written presentation techniques using multimedia are included in the course. Students are not obliged to use the project resources if they have equivalent sources in France. The project will also be used in an elective A-level course on France and Europe.

Institutional context

Senior administration is generally supportive of using IT in teaching, particularly if it is for teacher training or in-service, or for Distance Learning students. The CUT unit (Centrum för utbildningsteknik) instructs university staff in the use of IT in teaching. A new humanities CAL lab is about to open, which should encourage greater use and more cooperation between humanities departments. Pending appointment of Department Heads in French and Spanish, there is some leadership hiatus there, but a good nucleus of interest among teaching staff.

Reviewer's summary

The electronic basis of this project consists of a classified list of links to websites, sounds and photographs of French culture, literature et al., and examples of how raw information can be evaluated and presented. Students also have access to a variety of French online newspapers. There is a lengthy document (250+pp) in French, of exercises and project suggestions on linguistic, historical, literary, gastronomic, and media topics. These are based on factual websites (family, government etc.), or reprinted excerpts of literary texts and documents (some glossed).

Like other projects which are concerned primarily with guiding student access to reliable information sources on the Internet, the ultimate value of this project depends on the context in which the electronic resource is used. It is the teacher's function to create this framework — which normally happens in class. It can be relayed in electronic form, too, although the time allocated under these grants was generally too short to go beyond creating the actual resource.

In this case, PG has clearly put a great deal of thought into how the Web and other media resources can be integrated into the class, and how to encourage students to develop research and presentation skills using modern technologies; and he has been able to put much of it into electronic form. It would be of some value to the profession if that portion of his work, in particular, could be made generally available, as a guide to incorporating IT into cultural studies courses.

Per-Arne Öberg, Umeå University

Project 034/Ling-97

Aims

Automatized examination of vocabulary through a database of test questions stored in a computer.

Prior experience of IT

[This summary applies to most of the grantees from Umeå English Dept. See Projects 034, 037, 038, 039. PL] Basics, some knowledge of FirstClass, an introduction (generally deemed to be too technical) to FrontPage, but — except for Pat Shrimpton, below — no direct experience of creating an IT project.

Procedure

Examined TestPilot (Purdue University) as possible Web platform.

Platform/software

Was to be a Web-based, multiple-choice test, using randomly generated questions from a testbank, with score-keeping. (At time of review, only the introductory page was operative: www.eng.umu.se/vocabulary_test.htm)

Time taken

Less than one month.

Student involvement and reactions

N/A.

Additional comments by grantee

Intended for A-level (20 pts.), project would consist of a multiple-choice test which students would access by password. In cases where scores were too low, students would re-take the test, after an enforced pause (timed lock-out). Vocabulary would be words in context, selected from texts used in class.

Institutional context

[See this section of previous Project] The English Dept. has a good record of participation in national and international collaborative projects. Approximately 50 percent of the department's students are teacher trainees, and there are growing numbers of distant learners, corresponding via FirstClass. Other support for IT: the Dept. has approved an IT Policy statement, runs a course for trainee teachers on using IT, and the Dept. Head is very supportive of IT use.

Reviewer's summary

Due to administrative duties, the grantee was unable to work on the project as planned, but stated his intention to complete it in Summer 1998.

Pat Shrimpton, Umeå University

Project 037/Ling-97

Aims

A computer-based course in British and American realia and history. To enable the students to gain access to current information so that they can carry out assignments directed towards problem-based learning.

Prior experience of IT

[See this section of the previous Project]

PS has run distance education courses, and designed and supervised a project involving Web-based submissions by Umeå TT (teacher training) students abroad: "The Manchester Project" URL: <http://www.eng.umu.se/tt/>

Procedure

Summer 1997: learnt FrontPage ("very time-consuming"), designed web-pages, selected and classified links, converted texts (some previously written for the course).

Platform/software

Written with FrontPage: <http://www.eng.umu.se/education>

Time taken

Ca double what was funded (includes assistance of a colleague and the department's IT-ansvarige)

Student involvement and reactions

Not available for this project. Anecdotal reactions to the related Manchester Project were provided by students present at the interview, and reported by the teacher. These were uniformly positive about the value of using IT to

present papers, less so about the degree and manner of being introduced to the technologies and making effective use of them (all students were complete neophytes).

Additional comments by grantee

This resource is designed to encourage students to use the ("reliable") Web resources provided, in order to develop and support problem-based projects. In retrospect, PS thought that it might be pedagogically preferable to give the projects button more visual priority on the default page than the buttons which lead to the facts. Currently, it is the last of a series of six equal buttons, and is found at the end of the screen. [This is a relatively minor problem to fix, in an otherwise excellent layout. PL]

Institutional context

[See this section of the two previous Projects]

Reviewer's summary

The Web pages (all in English) are very usable: visually clean and attractive, brief but informative, consistent in layout and continuity, hierarchical within each sub-topic, with clear buttons for ease of navigation. The six sub-topics consist of one or more introductory pages followed by links to official sources in the UK. They are, in the order of presentation on the default page: an Introductory focus-page, History, Current situation, Schools and schooling (mainly on curriculum and assessment), Post-school education, and a page of sample topics for student projects.

This is a very well-organized site, giving access to official sites of British educational and governmental organizations, and the educational press. It is a site which can be highly recommended for courses with a similar purpose. In view of the evident need for teacher trainees at Umeå to become familiar with the Web as a source of information and as a presentation platform, it would be helpful (if expansion of this project becomes possible) to include that more technical advice — or create links to sites which do.

Gerald Porter, Umeå University

Project 038/Ling-97

Aims

Create a website for popular, vernacular and mass cultures of the English-speaking world.

Prior experience of IT

[See this section of Project 034]

Procedure

Took short FrontPage course ("too technical").

Platform/software

Text and links created in MSWord, converted ("with some difficulty") to html. URL: <http://www.eng.umu.se/culturec/Default.htm>

Time taken

Approximately 100 hours, including time of two instructors and IT-ansvarige. Some time lost through computer problems and during conversion to html.

Student involvement and reactions

No student reactions were available. Student access to networked computers is somewhat problematical.

Additional comments by grantee

This resource is to support a C-level culture course, which varies its emphasis between the different arts each semester. The Music section is currently more

developed than others. Popular culture is an attractive subject, and a resource such as this helps to capture that intrinsic interest and create the requisite analytical distance between the students and the (sometimes highly affective) sites they are encouraged to discuss.

An advantage of this medium is that it is non-linear, hypertextual, therefore accessible at any key point, in any order. There is potential for use at the B-level in future. Some interest among, and possibility of collaboration with colleagues in Ethnology, probably at graduate level.

Institutional context

[See this section of Projects 031, 034]

Reviewer's summary

The texts in this site are similar to lecture-notes, and are apparently closely related to the course which they supplement.

Format: the site consists of approximately 100 specially-written, relatively brief, interlinked pages, describing, separately, the Theory and Practice of cultural studies. The layout is text-like, other than small icons to identify the respective pages' Further Reading, and student Tasks. Each page contains a Return-to-homepage button. A site-map of the leading topics is the default page. Topic-pages are arranged hierarchically and contain links within the texts to further explanatory pages, which may be locally created or at remote websites. There are some typos (possibly quite confusing, e.g. under Semiotics: "This emotion is a sin [sic!] and a predicate of the thing").

Content: the Theory of popular culture is narrowed to three topics: semiotics, ideology, gender. Closer analysis of the Practice is contained in "case studies" of various cultures (music, youth, TV, women's, food, advertising [but not film]), which are interlinked to the Theory pages. This structure relates the core of theoretical principles associatively to a variety of different cultures. A comprehensive Reading list is also provided.

Given the demanding, specialist nature of the language of several texts (which is not glossed online), it would be instructive to know whether students are already familiar with the idiom of cultural studies at this level, and how they respond to using the site.

Elisabeth Mårald, Umeå University

Project 039/Ling-97

Aims

Create a website for teaching of literature, criticism of sources an important part.

Prior experience of IT

[See above, Project 034]

Procedure

Much initial time was spent defining equipment needs and designing/
converting webpages to include as much information as possible.

Platform/software

URL: <http://www.eng.umu.se/lughnasa/>

Time taken

Approximately twice the time granted.

Student involvement and reactions

Students were involved as the project was being developed. The number of contact hours for this section of the A-course had been reduced, so this site was seen as a means of encouraging more out-of-class work by students (in the event, this was successful). Anecdotal evidence and improved grade-achievement on student papers indicates a very positive response by the students.

Additional comments by grantee

The project was predicated on the principle that the Web's multimedia capability should be used only where appropriate. The pages should not be

book-like. Copyright issues did, however, prevent use of some of the music and dance from the play. [No doubt the same will apply to taking clips from the new film, unfortunately. PL]

Designing the pages and choosing the contents involved being very selective (from the large body of literature and links which is available). Compared to classroom teaching, creating the webpage meant defining the desired learning outcomes much more clearly. That sharper focus "may be one reason for the marked improvement in student papers" after the IT program was introduced (EM).

Institutional context

[See Projects 034, 037, 038]

Reviewer's summary

The top layer of this rich website (in English) contains study guides and thematically organized information to assist students in writing close-analysis papers on Brian Friel's play *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The opening page briefly explains the students' tasks, and provides a link ("Themes") to the main pages. [The text also links to a single review article of a single performance (confusingly, the link is called "Performances"), and to a site called "Broadway" which is apparently defunct. PL]

The "Themes" link leads to five sub-topics. The first, "Topics", consists of brief (3–5 line) notes on aspects of the background to the play. The notes contain many links to a further layer of more detailed explanations and to remote sites on Irish myths, language etc. Some of the remote sites include sound and attractive graphics. The other Themes (Individual Work, Joint Venture, Dramatization of *Dancing at Lughnasa*) describe two papers that are to be written by each student, and what is expected in them. These sections are similarly linked to another layer of more detailed information and study guidance sources.

It was clear during the Review that the grantee and her students were inspired by the experience of creating and using the webpages. Other colleagues considering creating similar literary projects would be well advised to contact EM.

Barbro Ekman, University College of Mälardalen

Project 040/Ling-97

Aims

Development of IT material re: Canadian Studies, tutorials on video, video conference.

Prior experience of IT

Basics.

Procedure

Summer 1997: set up e-mail exchange with Mt. St Vincent University in Canada, created a list of Canadian Studies webpages (on paper). Reviewed Web/CT, but found it unsuitable for her needs. Sept. 1997: took a short html course, but found it too technical. Discussion of delivery needs with experienced Spanish colleague (see Additional comments, below).

Platform/software

N/A (Project incomplete).

Time taken

Less than allocated (administrative duties intervened).

Student involvement and reactions

D-level course (Canadian/Australian Studies, including an essay with Canadian Studies as an optional topic. 20 pts.) is very popular, capped at 25 students.

Additional comments by grantee

The project will be part of an effort to increase knowledge about, and encourage exchanges with Canada. The course is project-based, therefore requires good research backing, such as these links are intended to provide. Other resources to be used include e-mail, CD-ROMs. Longer-range plans to offer the course as a Distributed Learning course (similar to a locally-developed A-level Spanish course, which is delivered to learning centres using video-conferencing and e-mail et al.).

Institutional context

Mälardalen prides itself on being a 'network' university college, which is evident in a number of ways: the IT Council coordinates, CenIT encourages IT in teaching; the Library provides/creates electronic resources and links. Mälardalen has almost achieved its goal of having 10 percent of its courses available by Distance Learning. [See also Project 016]

Reviewer's summary

The project was not available for review, and no student reaction was available, since the project had not yet been implemented in class.

Amadeu Batel & Fernandez Rodrigues, Stockholm University

Project 042/Ling-97

Aims

Let students from different countries use e-mail in order to develop communications skills.

Prior experience of IT

Basics.

Procedure

Based on an existing plan, the grant enabled the grantees to negotiate project details with Portuguese partners (Summer 1997), define its aims, and integrate it into an existing course (Aug.–Sept. 1997)

Platform/software

E-mail project. No special software or equipment.

Time taken

Adequate.

Student involvement and reactions

Not graded, but highly recommended for writing practice at an early stage of the A-course. Thirty day-and evening-course students were involved; few had experience using e-mail; early apprehensiveness soon dissipated.

Project was of limited duration, but several students continued to correspond privately with their Portuguese keypals.

Additional comments by grantee

The Portuguese programme at Stockholm University is large, and is the only one in Sweden; it attracts students of diverse background and academic areas of concentration, therefore needs projects which motivate various interests.

Student correspondence with Portuguese high-school partners was independent of instructor interference (e.g. not corrected before posting), other than the suggestion of topics, such as self-identification, requests for background information on Portuguese stories being read by the Swedish class. The aim was to encourage free exchange of linguistic and cultural information with native Portuguese, free of grade-pressures.

The longer-term intention is to analyse the language for error-types and style, by type of learner background (second generation speaker, prior residence in Portuguese-speaking country, knowledge of Spanish etc.). Preliminary analysis [predictably? PL] shows interference in lexis and syntax.

Institutional context

[See next Project 044]

Reviewer's summary

This is a straightforward 'keypals' project in an early stage of development (compared, say, to the more highly-structured Transatlantic Classroom or European Tandem projects). Its success in finding willing and active partners in Portugal, and its future existence, are very dependent on personal contact between the two instructors involved (Fernandez Rodrigues at Stockholm University, and a teacher in Portugal).

It was not possible to assess the learning outcomes, since no formal grading, pre-/post-tests, or student project-evaluations took place. Instructors felt that progress was made by the students, from initial 'copy-the-book' efforts, to more spontaneous, ambitious later work.

In order to keep student-generated texts 'pure' (uncorrected), students were not told that they could create their messages on a word-processor first²,

² Avoiding student use of spell-checking devices is a technique consciously espoused by some instructors. I do not share that view, believing it to be akin to denying students knowledge of an everyday tool (comparable to excluding calculators from maths courses, say). PL.

and run it through a spell-checker before transferring it to e-mail. Correction of their language therefore depended heavily on the competence and willingness of the Portuguese partners, since the instructors did not correct the work either. The instructors state that, over time, improvement in confidence and non-repetition of the errors corrected by the Portuguese correspondents was "clearly" evident.

Magnus Ljung & David Minugh, Stockholm University

Project 044/Ling-97

Aims

Corpus-based investigation made by students, using experience from linguistic research as an important component of the A-level course.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus extensive research use of corpora.

Procedure

Summer/Fall 1997: arranging access to, selecting, and collating corpora; arranging installation of concordancer in computers; writing student guides to using computers and corpora for research, planning weekly projects and a new syllabus to integrate this project into the course.

Platform/software

Three corpora: online, on CD-ROM, and one 'mini-corpus', consisting of 14 carefully selected smaller corpora of 100K words each. Concordancers: WordSmith, WordCruncher, et al., used on 22 site-licensed computers.

Time taken

More than funded.

Student involvement and reactions

Two hundred and fifty A-level students were involved. Corpus-project work, one project per week, is in three steps: i) projects are introduced in weekly lectures, using computer projection to illustrate research tools and techniques; ii) students work on the projects in triads in their own time, then iii) discuss results in weekly group seminars. Corpus projects are not separately graded (i.e. are not assigned a set point-value), hence may be poorly received

meantime. Reaction (a group of students and language tutors was interviewed by PL in the absence of the grantees): students were open to the project in principle, after only a few attempts, and despite some computer problems (connectivity, access) and unfamiliarity with search techniques. They and tutors foresaw usefulness of corpus-work at higher levels, commented on the revitalizing effect of using IT in this course.

Additional comments by grantees

Using their own extensive experience of corpus linguistics and the availability of many extensive corpora in English, the grantees wanted to devise a project which was appropriate for large numbers of A-level students of English. The aim is to provide them with an independent skill for later study, a greater awareness of linguistic variety and its foundations, and reinforcement ('validation') of subtler aspects of English (e.g. use of prepositions). This use of IT may prove useful in retaining the interest of students who have lived abroad, and find parts of the course no challenge otherwise.

Copyright is a constraint against some plans to expand the searchable database. Future plans: refining the use, creating closer integration with the course as a whole. A scaled-down version is being considered for teacher trainees. The long-range goal is to allow external access by school-teachers (but that raises copyright problems).

The experience developing/using this project will be discussed in academic papers.

Institutional context

Stockholm University linguists have a long tradition of media use, and an enviable facility to house it. The new, well-staffed and versatile, state-of-the-art Lärostudion (Language Learning Resource Center) will improve student access considerably, although it is to be shared by all languages departments. English has some budget to acquire research materials (corpora), none to buy teachers' development time for new projects.

Reviewer's summary

This is a well-researched, clearly mapped project. It appears to have a promising future at Stockholm, and will no doubt be influential elsewhere, through the growing interest in corpus-work for undergraduates at other universities in Sweden [See Projects 001, 016, 028], and other non-English-speaking countries, presumably.

Marianne Mathlein, Stockholm University

Project 045/Ling-97

Aims

Develop multimedia material for a course in Swedish as a foreign language.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus MM had previously written CALL exercises for a textbook for general learners of SFL — Swedish as a Foreign Language (which has direct relevance to this project's subject: Swedish for academic purposes).

Procedure

June 1997–Dec. 1997: Roger Nyborg explored uses of the Web vs. other platforms, wrote the Swedish reading comprehension texts. Marianne Mathlein wrote grammar exercises. Margareta Trevisani wrote cultural comments.

Platform/software

At the time of review, text and exercises were being distributed and marked via e-mail, pending conversion onto the Web. Audio texts were then available on designated computers for listening and speaking practice. They are now built into the website, using Netscape sound, at: <http://130.237.147.247/>

Time taken

Slightly more than the time granted.

Student involvement and reactions

Students are mainly Socrates/Erasmus participants and others needing Swedish for study purposes, or as a general introduction to Swedish language and culture. Number of students: 300–400 p.a. and rising. At the time of

review, not many students had yet used the new material. First evaluations were very positive (based on samples of the e-mail version which were tried out as they were being written).

Additional comments by grantees

Previously, the course materials were locally developed handouts. The purpose of this project was/is to make course materials and exercises accessible at any university computing facility. Student numbers are increasing rapidly, so there is growing need to give them more independent practice and a wider variety of texts (more varied vocabulary-types, and at different competence levels). This project will form the basis for a bigger one being planned to meet those needs. The Department (Nordic Languages) has some funds to pay for development time on this larger project. There are possible implications for a LINGUA project on less-frequently taught languages, in which one of the project's outside contributors is involved.

There is no intention to make this course fully computerized (e.g. as a stand-alone, self-access program), even if such were possible.

Institutional context

[See previous Project 044]

Reviewer's summary

The topics of the exercises are based on likely needs of the target learner group (identifying self and others, greetings, student living). Exercises are not fully interactive; students compare their own answers with models. Difficult terms and culturally interesting points are glossed through hotlinks in the texts. The language of instruction, of translations, and of the glosses is mainly English.

The project so far consists of 9 of 36 planned units containing basic reading and listening comprehension exercises which are enriched with cultural items that are likely to interest foreign students. They are simple to use, and informative. They will serve a very useful function as adjuncts to other class activities. Other learners of SFL will no doubt appreciate having access to these Web-based exercises, too. It is to be hoped that the team will be able to continue to develop the project along the lines described above.

Sari (Röntynen) Högländer, Stockholm University

Project 046/Ling-97

Aims

To adapt extra-curricular [Finnish] grammar exercises to computer-supported individual studies.

Prior experience of IT

Basics.

Procedure

Summer 1997: background research into existing IT projects in Finnish (few exist, none suitable), and the practice of CALL.

Platform/software

Created with Claris HomePage, the program (called SuoNet) is platform-independent. Web access is at: <http://www.finska.su.se/SuoNet/index.html>

Time taken

To research background and create first version: all the time that was granted. Trying out the paper version and adapting to student reactions to it were extra.

Student involvement and reactions

Students were involved from the first (consulted on design, layout, contents), and one class in Fall 1997 used paper versions of the project. There was insufficient time before the Review to have a full class of students evaluate the IT version of the program. The early users of the paper version were said to have been positive, as were two students who were interviewed during this

Review (they had helped develop it and did use the Web version). Students unfamiliar with computing are given instruction before using SuoNet.

Additional comments by grantee

The program is designed to support a B-level grammar course, but is used also by two A-level courses, and will be used by essay students in senior courses. Focus is on the syntax and morphology of Finnish, a difficult aspect for Swedish learners. A larger purpose is to improve parsing skills among students who typically enter the university with poor knowledge of grammar terms, and to encourage independent study. The reason for making the program platform-free was to enable students to work anytime, anywhere, given the (then current) access difficulties on campus.

Future plans: SH intends to continue developing the project, as time allows. She achieved more than she expected in the time allotted by the grant, but would like to accommodate more of the student needs in future (more information, more exercises, less immediate access to correct answers — i.e. more encouragement to consider alternatives, etc.). Other uses: Adoption by state TV is a possibility, to support a distance course to improve writing among the Finnish-speaking minority in northern Sweden.

Institutional context

[See Project 044] The Finnish Dept., the largest outside Finland, has committed firmly to the use of IT as an adjunct to classroom teaching. Lack of internal development funding obliges members to go to outside agencies, however. One colleague has a major, three-year Council grant for a language-learning project; others participate in the "Digital Democracy" IT project.

Reviewer's summary

This project has benefited from close cooperation between the students and the developer (colour-coding the different parts of speech is one example which works very well). The layout is deliberately clean, to speed the download for home users. Fonts are large for legibility on any screen.

Instructions (in Swedish) are concise, and navigation is easy—the central table of 28 'parts-of-speech' buttons and the buttons for the exercises and the answer key appear on every main page. This program is a useful reference and practice site, suitable for use by any Swedish student of Finnish grammar.

Paul Touati, Lund University

Project 050/Ling-97

Aims

To create a pedagogical link library and to make an evaluation of necessary resources for sound and graphical applications. To result in several work stations for the students to use and a guide about Internet's possibilities in language studies.

Prior experience of IT

Basics, plus a significant amount of assistance from a graduate student with more sophisticated experience.

Procedure

Summer 1997: researched available authoring programs, chose Lingus (Larsson Education product). Fall 1997: chose suitable Internet sources, created hierarchical bookmark bank, set up a workstation, worked with Larsson to adapt software as needs were refined, and created first exercises. These were demonstrated to the dept. in late Nov. 1997.

Platform/software

Lingus enables capture of sound (.wav files) and text, and creation of listening comprehension exercises at dedicated workstations. Use on a LAN was under investigation at the time of the Review.

Time taken

"Probably 3–4 times" the amount granted. Includes the extra assistance of graduate student test-drivers.

Student involvement and reactions

The major technical work was carried out by the graduate student assistant. Other students tested and added to the program during its early development. Use is optional. Users are positive about the autonomy and claim increased learning.

Additional comments by grantee

The goals of the project are to exploit topical, authentic, Internet-based materials for cultural enrichment and language learning, primarily at B-level. Increasing learner autonomy is a departmental policy, which this project furthers. Students are encouraged to create their own exercises for use by peers. On average, a seven-minute sound clip takes three hours to transform into student exercises.

IT was still little used in the dept. at the time of the Review, but confidently expected to play a larger role. The project has created a template, which can be used by other language groups in the dept. The intention is to integrate the project more closely into language courses (but lack of equipment is the major obstacle. The project resides on a single computer.). The application and execution processes of this grant were themselves instructive preparation for future projects.

Institutional context

[See Project 029]. The Romance Languages Dept. has a small budget for course development, which can be used for IT if so requested. Equipment is sparse, and not adequate for general use by additional student users. The Chair is supportive.

Reviewer's summary

Once the 'raw' audio text (news or documentary items usually) is converted and transcribed into Lingus, comprehension questions are generated, based on sound-source alone, text-source alone, or both. Students can hear the audio text and read the transcription piecemeal or in any amount they choose. Exercises consist of fill-in-the-blanks in a transcribed text, or whole text re-creation (*dictée*), or content questions. Incorrect answers generate a dialogue box asking *Retry? Need Help?*, or *Move on?* Correct answers are available on demand. Students can also match their own audio response with the pitch, tone and language of the original. Reference books and CDs are also available close to hand for checking unknown vocabulary etc.

This is an innovative, intrinsically attractive project, which has generated useful content, valuable IT experience for department members and students, and a template which others can exploit in their own disciplines. It deserves to become better known among the profession.

Abbreviations

A

A/V audio visual

C

CAL computer-assisted learning

CALL computer-assisted language learning

cf compare

D

DVD digital video disk

E

esp especially

et al. and others

F

fall used in North America for autumn

ff and following

N

N/A not applicable

P

p.a. per annum

Q

qv see

R

re about, concerning

T

TEL technology-enhanced learning

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Högskoleverkets skriftserie 1998:11 S

I skriftserien finns utredningar och analyser som utförts på Högskoleverkets uppdrag. Innehållet speglar inte nödvändigtvis verkets uppfattning.

Högskoleverkets skriftserie 1999:1 S
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Högskoleverket är en central myndighet för frågor som rör universitet och högskolor. Verket arbetar med kvalitetsbedömningar, uppföljningar, utveckling av högre utbildning, utredningar, tillsyn, internationella frågor och studieinformation. Dessutom ansvarar verket för samordningen av det svenska universitetsdatornätet SUNET.