

Your submission to EUROCALL: Friday 7 Sept 2007, 9.00-10.30

1st Author Name: Jeannine Gerbault
Institution: University of Bordeaux 3, France
Email: Jannine.Gerbault@u-bordeaux3.fr

2nd Author Name: Sabine Yloenen
Institution: University of Jyväskylä, Finland

3rd Author Name: Dominika Benesova
Institution: Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Symposium Title: Mastering CALL: towards the normalisation of practices

Sub-Theme: The Normalisation of CALL

Target Educational Sector: Higher Education

Symposium Description:

The main theme of Eurocall 2007, "mastering multimedia", is an incentive to reflect and build upon the experience acquired in the years that we have been using/developing CALL materials. Language learners have become more autonomous when using these materials, and content developers have become more capable of integrating various components of the language teaching research results into the materials. Building on this experience is a new challenge for authors of CALL materials. The proposed symposium aims at dealing with this topic by including papers in which the authors will address issues related to the lessons learned and the directions they may point to, particularly in terms of material organisation, content, and facilitating devices. What can be learned from users of CALL materials; what do the experience of, and feedback from actual language learners teach us?

The results of a survey among users of CALL programmes in which the authors have tried to associate online and offline use of ICT are presented in the **first paper**. How do materials developed today build on the users' shared knowledge about computer environments - what do authors expect in the users' behaviours?

What can the place and role of help be in such environments? This is the topic of the **second** proposed paper.

How do programme content providers take into account and incorporate into their materials the recent consensus about the value of the CEFR as a reference for language skills descriptors, and the concern for the production of resources based on needs analyses in order to suit specific target users' needs? These issues are addressed in the **third paper**.

The **last paper** focuses on challenges and pitfalls of the cooperation between language teachers and programmers when developing a CALL programme for a less widely used and taught language.

Paper 1: Research and development: ***How is multimedia material used in language training?*** Today's language training is practiced more and more with the help of online and offline multimedia material. Custom- designed software is often used for autonomous language learning which holds certain restrictions to

communicative skills training. However, the use of multimedia material can provide valuable assistance in the process of language learning and it also requires and develops new media literacy skills. As both these goals are in accordance with respective policies of the European Commission, the production of such material is supported by its programmes, for example. In this study, we are going to investigate the use of a multimedia programme that was developed for exchange students with support of the Socrates Lingua 2 action. Our aims are to find out: 1. Who uses the programme?, 2. Why is the programme used?, 3. How is the programme used?, and 4. What are the benefits and challenges using the programme? We intend to explore these questions with the example of the German EUROMOBIL programme. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed and sent to 250 users who have downloaded or ordered the programme. Our study will focus on the following topics: 1. Background of the users (gender, age, computer skills), 2. Purpose for using the programme (language learning, language teaching, material distribution, research), 3. Ways of using the programme (autonomous or blended learning), and 4. Experiences with the programme (opinions on usability, what skills were improved, what strategies were used to overcome possible programme restrictions). The results of this study will be available at the Eurocall conference 2007. They are expected to yield valuable information on how language learners initiate, carry on, and react to language study through using CALL material.

Paper 2: Research and development: ***Mastering CALL: is there a role for computer-wiseness?*** One of the characteristics of CALL is that the use of ICT allows for autonomous learning. As multimedia language learning content producers have been adapting their products to take this variable into account, and as language learners have acquired familiarity with the media, new developments have been observed in the pedagogy of on-line or off-line learning. Using the French EUROMOBIL programme as an example, this paper aims to describe how the experience acquired in the years that both teachers and learners have been developing/using multimedia CALL programmes can be reflected today in the materials. The French EUROMOBIL programme aims at providing foreign students intending to study in French universities with linguistic and cultural information that will make them able to adapt adequately in their host French environment, in academic as well as in everyday situations. We will show how the material developed builds on the users' shared knowledge about computer environments – on what the developers/pedagogues expect in the users' behaviours (e.g., computer-wiseness, autonomy, non-linear browsing, optional help). We will also stress the fact that, in the development of the help files as well as that of the feedback files for language learning activities, various teacher roles have been exemplified in order to foster and encourage autonomy, and provision has been made for the users' computer-wiseness.

Paper 3: Research and development: ***EUROMOBIL and CEFR – Where shall the twain meet?*** As CEFR gains more importance and recognition within Europe, authors of various CALL material may face the question of how their material relates to the reference levels set in the Framework. This paper aims to describe one such case wherein a multimedia language learning and information programme is purposefully based on needs of target users instead of skill descriptors presented by CEFR. Nevertheless, the programme authors feel the need to attempt some classification of their material in order to facilitate the orientation of both potential learners and teachers in terms of what skills they can train by means of the programme in question (Czech EUROMOBIL programme). Fortunately, reference descriptions on four levels (A1-B2) are already available for Czech as a foreign

language, which is the programme target language. The Czech EUROMOBIL programme intends to provide for development of „survival“ skills in the Czech environment and in everyday situations. These objectives stem from the needs analysis of our target group - foreign exchange students coming to Czech Republic. Therefore the language learning tasks focus namely on basic reading and listening comprehension along with limited oral production and interaction. Writing is deliberately reduced because managing Czech alphabet and spelling with its special characters is a task beyond most exchange students´ horizon. The above-mentioned features of the programme pose a real challenge to the authors in achieving their task set forth in the beginning of this paper. We assume that needs-driven survival skills trained in our programme may differ from those described in reference materials and may not necessarily correspond to one particular reference level. Our work is in progress and findings will be presented along with the completion of the EUROMOBIL programme

Paper 4: Research and development: *From storyboards to implementation.*

Multimedia language learning applications can either be seen as substitutes for face-to-face language learning courses with human teachers, or as complementary approaches to be used either in parallel, or as a first contact with a foreign language and culture. The quality of such applications depends on the ability of their designers to use both the characteristics of face-to-face language training and the specific possibilities of modern multimedia platforms to add value to the learning process. With this in mind, designing multimedia CALL programmes presupposes interactive cooperation between linguists, designers, computer scientists and potential users, and the importance of such cooperation is being increasingly perceived as an essential ingredient in the development of sound programmes. This paper will present the case of the development of the Euromobil project in Romania. It will propose an overview of the cooperation process. It will show, for example, that the linguists who work on such applications need not necessarily know how they are to be implemented, but they need to be aware of the specific possibilities of multimedia platforms (user-friendly objects, actions such as drag-and-drop, recording the user's voice, simple animation, playing images and sounds, etc.) and thus to know what to ask -- and what can be asked -- from the programmers via the story boards. In addition, the challenges and pitfalls of the cooperation between language teachers and programmers when developing a CALL programme for a less widely used and taught language seem to point to the need to train both language teachers and material developers in constructivistic and new media pedagogy.

Keywords: Assessment/Feedback; Design; Independent Learning; Other; Learner Autonomy

Biography:

Jeannine Gerbault is an Associate Professor at the University of Bordeaux, France. She received a Ph.D. from UCLA. Her research interests are in the cognitive and socio-psychological aspects of the use of ICT for language learning and in the relationships between ICT development and language policies.