LLTI Highlights

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Welcome to"LLTI-Highlights." This column features a selection of important electronic discussions from the LLTI—Language Learning and Technology International—listserv. This column features an overview of the most important discussions of the second half of the 2002, which have been summarized and paraphrased by me. Otmar Foelsche, the moderator of the electronic discussion list, has assigned a reference number to each topic that appeared in the discussion list. This number can be used to search the LLTI archives. Instructions on searching the archives appear at the end of this column.

Recording from cassette into computer

Although discussions about digitizing audio or video materials are reoccurring regularly on the LLTI listserv, the threads initiated by Jim Millard's query in late June 2002 generated a quite engaged July discussion on Recording from cassette into computer (#6727). Jim Millard started the discussion with the following message:"We have faculty who would like to record from cassette directly into our Language Lab computers using"line in." While it does record, the audio quality is very poor and unacceptable for their use. Has anyone dealt with this problem before? Is it because we are bringing analog sound into a digital source? If we invest in higher quality sound cards will this help? ... Any insight you can provide would be much appreciated." A first reply was posted by Arjen Florijn from Amsterdam: "...Even with the cheapest soundcards you can get acceptable sound quality. But the original tape should be good. Invest in good quality microphones, tape recorder, and tape... What about the speakers? ...Computer speakers are, in general, not top of the bill, so it might just be the play back quality that is unacceptable." Damion Renner agreed that the problem was most likely not related to the sound card, and he had further suggestions:"...The sound quality will depend a great deal on the quality of the source. If you have poorly recorded tapes, the end result will be poor in quality. For poor quality tape recordings, I use a Tascam 133 tape deck, which allows me to boost the left and right channels independently to get a stronger output signal. The deck also has dolby noise reduction, which removes some of the surface noise before it gets to the sound card. Once the recording is digitized you can further improve the sound quality by using the filters within a sound editor

like Cool Edit Pro or Sound Forge..." Frank Keller added:"... The only way that I have been able to get acceptable quality taped recordings into digital format is to capture from a tape deck into a digital converter box (we use Sony) processed in Final Cut Pro on our G4 Power Mac. You get quality sound ... that you can also edit." Lee Ramsdell's suggestion focused on even more sophisticated editing software:"...As we have a number of phonograph records, we purchased Clean!plus ... The software has restoration that removes clicks, crackles, rumbling, and background noise in real time." John Dowling recommended editing software for the PC, followed by more tips on ensuring a better sound quality:" ...Relying on the integrated sound card that came with the machine is sometimes a problem. We use Real Jukebox as the recording or conversion software, which will convert analog audio to AVI and MPG files. Other similar software applications include Sound Forge XP5 at $60.00, and the Cakewalk model or the Sonic model at similar prices....You will need to check the sound card setup to select"Microphone,"'Line in,"or"mixer"depending on the sound card. The patch cord connection from the output of the audio device, possibly the earphone jack, to the computer sound card jacks labeled "Microphone"or"Line in,"should match the selection you made on the card setup. Patch cords are available at Radio Shack...."Pat Miller recommended converting the analog audio into MP3 files and points out a source for editing software:"...The software we are currently using is called MusicMatch jukebox version 7.2. You can download the freeware from the home page at *http://www.musicmatch.com*. The basic program is freeware, to get the package needed for our purposes you can upgrade for about $20.00."Derek Roff's advise focused on the set-up of the equipment:" ... I am thinking that there must be a more fundamental problem in Jim's setup, if he is getting "very poor, unacceptable"results. My first guess is that the input signal into the computer is much too strong, and is causing severe distortion. This could come from the output from the tape player being too powerful, from the settings on the sound card being too sensitive, or from plugging a line level input into the microphone port on the sound card...I would try using another tape player. If you have any kind of an analog volume control that you can plug into the line, between the tape player and the computer, you might try turning the sound down that way until the sound coming into the computer seems much too soft. Only then can you have confidence that you are not overdriving the circuit." A hardware-tip from Margo Burns followed this practical suggestion:"I recommend getting a device called an iMic from Griffin software. You plug in a mic or patch cord from a CD player into it, and then it plugs into any available USB port on your computer (*http:// www.griffintechnology.com/audio/imic_main.html*). The iMic

universal audio adapter is a USB device that adds a stereo input and output to your Mac or PC. This allows the connection of virtually any microphone or sound input device to the iBook, Titanium PowerBook, PowerMac or any other Mac or PC with a USB port... By using USB, the iMic provides significantly superior audio input and output performance over built in audio...The iMic not only provides amazingly high quality performance but is remarkably inexpensive at a suggested retail price of $35." Ann Cook shared her experiences with the recent purchase of iMic:"Excellent solution, and I have ordered iMic. At the time of ordering, I was told that I also needed a recording application such as Peak (*http://www.bias-inc.com*) or Sound Studio (*http://www.felttip.com*). In order to convert the Mac sound files (WAV equivalent) to MP3, you need a converter such as iTunes, which often comes bundled with Mac or is available as a free download at *http://www.Mac.com....*"

Advice sought for new language building

The month of August tends to be a less active month for the LLTI. That does not mean, however, that the discussions cease to be interesting. The August exchanges focused on a key IALLT topic—**Advice sought for new language building** (#6762). Lee Forester started the threads with the following message:"I am in the wonderful position of representing our language department at Hope College...in the planning of a new building for us and the Communications department. A part of this will be a new language lab. I am looking for any advice I can get to help me with our proposal to the administration. We have 3,000 students at the college with about a one year language requirement. Currently I am proposing a 32-station lab with an additional 16-station dual classroom/lab. We now have a 16-station audio-lingual tape lab, so it'll be quite a jump.... Is anyone out there who has built a new building and/or language lab in the last few years? ..." Marty Dewindt referred to another colleague:" David Westerhof-Schultz at a school in south-central Michigan just put in a whole new large lab. They went with Tandberg console..."Read Gilgen's advice focused on an IALLT publication:"As a starting point, you might want to get your hands on a copy of Language Center Design Kit, Third Edition, from IALLT. You can find information on this at: *http://iallt.org/iallt_services/iallt_publications.html*." LeeAnn Stone gave helpful search tips for the archives of the LLTI listserv:"...Browse through"lab planning," "staffing,"and "lab systems."These will provide you with some useful info related to your project..."

Appropriate tape recorder

Gloria Balcarcel from the Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga started an interesting September discussion when seeking advice for an **Appropriate tape recorder** (#6808) with the following message:"I am a novice researcher and I need your help. I am ob-

serving classes and record them with my journalist tape-recorder, but I am having problems with transcriptions. I cannot understand what the teachers say. Since I am interested in teacher talk, I know that I need to purchase a new recorder. Does somebody know about a good one that includes a wireless microphone?" Bob Majors came up with some helpful suggestions:"If you are having problems understanding recorded spoken word, it may not be that your recorder is the weak link in the chain. It is more likely a problem with microphone...selection, and/or the setting of audio level...If wireless is important, you may need to spend a little more. I typed"audio recorder wireless microphone" into Google and came up with some useful sites, such as *http://www.mineroff.com/nature/wireless.htm*.... Finally, you have the recording medium. You could try minidisc or a portable DAT recorder. Be sure to check the manufacturer's recommendations in case heat and humidity are a concern." James Hogg's reply also concerned the microphone:"Your recorder may be fine. It sounds like your microphone is too far away from the speaker. Can you place the microphone and recorder closer? If the teacher is moving and turning away from the mic then you probably will not pick up their speaking in that case. The best solution, if you really need to record only the teacher would be to use a lavaliere mic placed on the front of the shirt of the speaker..."Steven Doellefeld's message also dealt with wireless microphones:"... If you have an external microphone jack on the recorder, you will be able to use a wireless mic. Do be advised that the wireless mics designed for the consumer market are quite fragile, and not very well made. The products made for the professional market are much better, and more rugged, but very pricey..."

LeeAnn Stone's advise was based on her own experience:"Having just completed a 1 1/2 year project that involved taping teachers' classrooms as well as interviews..., I can tell you that at a certain point, the quality of the tape player is irrelevant. By miking the teachers (wireless) you can capture their words better. But typically, that is more intrusive than most researchers want to be. Our solution (although I will admit we still missed some words) was to place two small"journalist-type"tape recorders in the room—one closer to the teacher, and one closer to wherever the researcher was positioned. I would use the recorder close to me to add comments when necessary, such as indicate actions and events that wouldn't be captured by the tape...."

Language lab design question

Lee Forester resumed the August discussion on new learning centers during the month of October. This time, he had a **Language lab design question** (#6914):"Now a further question on the actual space: I'm currently envisioning having a single teaching lab in

that the whole lab can be used to host an entire class.... As such, I want it to be able to function both as a 25-station computer lab (individual and pair work on projects, not paired dialogs or anything) and...for'regular' class work, i.e. lecture, discussion, small groups etc. I imagine the best arrangement would be to have computers along the walls with either desk chairs or perhaps small tables or chairs in the middle. Do any of you have experience with such an arrangement? What are some pros/cons? ... And how much net square feet would you envision for such a room?..." Derek Roff agreed with the envisioned room arrangement, followed by very detailed recommendations:"The u-shaped computer layout, with computers against the walls of the classroom/lab on three sides, is my favorite layout for a computer classroom. It makes access to the computers easier.... It provides the best line of sight for the students to watch the teacher, and vice versa.... When you refer to "desk chairs" in the middle, I am imagining the type of chairs with an attached...writing surface. If this is what you mean, I would argue against it... Our most successful lab has swivel chairs with high quality casters. These allow students to quickly pivot their attention from computer to teacher to room center, and to roll their chairs for pair work or other flexible arrangements.... We argued against the large central worktable that was favored by some teachers in the planning discussions. We opted for foldable, removable tables. As expected, all the teachers prefer having clean open space in the middle of the classroom, and we almost never get a request to set up the tables. Students do their"regular"work in a circle or in small groups, while sitting in their swivel chairs, with no writing surfaces, other than their notebooks and laps. We have not had complaints... Given that you want space for twenty-five students, the size of the room will be governed by how much width you give to each workstation. If you can spare four feet of width per student, it is much easier for two students to work together on the same computer. This kind of collaborative learning can be very effective.... Some labs have as little as 28" per station, but I think of 36" as a minimum. The number of square feet needed depends on how you lay out the room. A 36' square room could accommodate twenty-five student computers comfortably, with space for a teacher's station at the front.... Changing the dimensions of the room to 40' by 25' would let you put the same number of computers into one thousand square feet...."Judy Shoaf also argued for this type of room design:"We have a wonderful room with computers around 3 walls, instructor station, and tables in the middle...The tables ...are quite narrow and also light, so they can be moved into a big rectangle or into rows, or even moved aside. The instructors didn't like at first the configuration but they grew to enjoy it. When the students are facing the teacher they are not distracted by computer screens, but

when they are working on the computers the instructor can walk around and see what they are doing...."There are also downsides to the u-shaped design, as Jason McKrola explained:"The lab layout your are suggesting is very similar to what we have here in the Interactive Learning Center of Lewis & Clark. We have twenty-five G4s in an elongated horseshoe, with the workstations along the walls and a projection screen at the front of the classroom. The "cons" of this arrangement are that the instructor station is one of the workstations on the perimeter and there is no eye contact without everyone turning away from the workstation. Also, to view the projection screen at the front of the room, everyone must turn away from the workstation. I think a more traditional"teaching lab"layout would be preferable—rows of workstations facing front, with the instructor station at the front of the room, under the projection screen, facing the lab."

Victor Aulestia suggested a resource for different room designs:"... open *http://www.interiorconcepts.com*, and click on "Furniture for Educational Facilities", then click on"Interactive Floor Plan"and take a look at some neat design ideas. If you want your lab to be a multi functional facility you need to have furniture that allows the top edge of the...LCD Panel to be located below the line of vision ...."Jack Burston had objections to theVictor Aulestia's suggestions: "...On the matter of keeping video displays below the line of sight, unless you have something else in mind, this requires recessing the units below the desktop with some type of Plexiglas covering. In the labs where I have seen this type of installation, those using it would not recommend it ... because of two major problems. The first ... was light glare, even when the units are fitted with protective hoods. The second problem was that of ergonomics. Recessed screens are quite a distance away and, worse, the downward viewing angle can be quite tiring.... I also ran into the problem of my legs banging into the under-desk well that housed the monitor. Presumably this would be less of a problem with LCD monitors."Derek Roff agreed:"My experience supports Jack's conclusions. We thought that monitors-under-glass was a great solution, but having lived with it for several years, I would not do it again. In addition to the serious problems that Jack mentions, we have found several additional annoyances: Heat build-up can be significant from the CRT. Smudges and fingerprints are a constant problem, and scratches in the glass build up fairly quickly, leading to a more frequent need for replacement than we imagined." Joan Costello found a workable solution for this type of set-up:"... we have the monitors installed in the desk so it is a flat desktop.... Most of our students love them. I only remember one person complaining because she did not have good neck mobility. They are very neat, good sightline to the teacher, provide good writ-

ing area. Glare is a problem. We took out most of the fluorescents and have halogen lights installed around the room and some incandescent lights around the desk area. This is enough light for students to work easily...One drawback is that it is not easy to see for two people to share. Also we started out with 14" monitors and now have 17" in 2/3 of them and I would say 17" is a must...The lab is used as a teaching facility most of the time so students aren't here for long periods of time.... We have been happy with the arrangement."

Labs going under

Another October discussion entitled **Labs going under** (#6916) was launched by Bruce Parkhurst with the following message:" In the NERALLD region we have lost at least two labs in the past year (UMass Amherst and Regis College). I am compiling information about labs across the US, which have either been closed or incorporated into other units (e.g. computing/technology services or libraries or media centers). I would appreciate it if anyone who knows of such situations would post a short note on LLTI..."

Tom Browne responded with the following:"I have changed my reporting line to Computing and Information Services at the beginning of last academic year. There has been no change in terms of the function or mission of the facility."Nina Garrett had more vague information:"I believe that Wendy Baker Davis'lab at Franklin and Marshall was taken over by academic computing a couple of years ago, but I don't remember dates or details."Mary Fetherston reported a similar change:"The Language Learning Resource Center at URI migrated from the Dept of Languages to Instructional Technology and Media Services in January'99. As a result, we now also provide classroom media support for the entire building. We are in the largest classroom building on campus and, starting this semester, the only building on campus with any A/V support after 4 p.m."Mary Morrisard-Larkin mentioned a similar situation:"The lab at Holy Cross was taken over by Audio-Visual at least four or more years ago. While it still primarily serves Modern Languages, it is referred to as the Multimedia Resource Center. I think that this switch may have occurred when Holy Cross solicited grant funds to convert the lab from audio to digital and needed to make the proposal look more attractive." Another change was reported by Sue Breeyear: "The Language Learning Resource Center at Saint Michael's College, in Colchester, Vermont, was taken out of the Library's reporting line and put into the Department of Information Technology last spring. We have a unique collaboration thing going on, though—the library's budget pays for any text-related materials, including videos and ESL materials; and IT pays for language and other software. We meet together once a month and try to keep

the communication going."

Mike Ledgerwood explained the situation in his region:"SUNY Binghamton has no language lab. It used to have an audio lab. SUNY Buffalo has a multimedia facility shared with ESL and the World Language Institute. However, it has no official language lab. SUNY Oswego has never had a"formal"language center director. It has had a facility however. This situation is in process of change. SUNY Cortland has a new facility with no fulltime oversight. SUNY Potsdam has an updated facility with no fulltime oversight. These two are more or less self-regulated with just some coordination of oversight. Buffalo State SUNY is looking to update and change its facility. SUNY New Paltz has Becky and she can give more details..." To this, Rebecca Adae replied:"Nope, SUNY New Paltz is definitely not going under. We just ... officially opened our new $558,000 language-learning center. Foreign languages and ESL have always been stressed on this campus for many reasons: a GE requirement of two semesters of FL...., the presence of the Language Immersion Institute for non-traditional students..., the presence of a strong and long established ESL program, many strong international study abroad and exchange programs..."

Using digital video with computers

The threads on the LLTI listserv don't deal exclusively with technical or lab questions, but often focus on the classroom application of different technologies in addition to technological aspects. This was true for the November discussion on **Using digital video with computers** (#6928), started by Gayle Pellicano with the following: "I am studying with the Online Master's of Arts in Educational Technology at Pepperdine. I teach at a combined junior and senior high school in Japan. I was wondering if anyone has ever used digital videos with their students. I thought it might be fun for the students to do a role-play or something and then check it out on the computer. I would also like them to learn how to edit digital video and such. Has anyone ever done this? Or do you have any ideas about using digital video? What are some ways you use the computer as a tool for language development?" David Flores promptly responded with an example, followed by some technical advice:"I have used video in class before, and it was pretty successful...A couple of semesters ago I was teaching a Spanish 103 class using the textbook "Claro Que Si."The last chapter is a short play. I grouped my students and had them memorize a scene so that they might act it our before the camera ... We filmed it, and had much fun doing it.... I was recently hired to run Loyola's new Language Learning Center, and digital video will soon figure prominently in our lab. The editing of digital video is really quite simple and fun. If you have Mac OSX there is a video editor included. For PCs, many commercial prod-

ucts are available. We are currently running"Pinnacle Studio"and have found it most satisfying. I have used it for digitizing material to put on the server..."KayYang had a similar report:"There are a few instructors who incorporate video production as a class assignment at this university. I assist those instructors and their students so that they can use our video equipment and edit their video at the language labs. The instructors help students write scripts. Once the script is proved, students start their video project. In most cases, three or four students work together in group and they operate a video camera in turn without help outside their group. For editing, students use the basic editing software, called iMovie, which is bundled with Apple computers nowadays. In general, they put a great amount of time on the video project. But many of them seem to have fun while they work on it..." Roy Howard listed further examples for using digital video:" I use Final Cut Pro 3 to create a variety of types of videos for language and culture teaching, including full length documentaries, short movies of culture or language topics, and short clips of only a few seconds each. The short clips (exported to QuickTime) are especially useful, as they can target specific aspects of language, and can be easily saved on the computer to integrate into PowerPoint, web, or other multimedia applications."

OS X, Word X, and special characters

The month of December is only a short month for LLTI discussions. Nevertheless, there were quite a few exchanges about OS X, Word X, and special characters (#6956). David Kanig initiated this discussion:"To input a transliteration of Japanese into Word files, a user running Word X on a Mac under OS 10.2 would like to place a macron over the letter U, a combination which does not seem to be part of ordinary keyboarding. Can anyone suggest a solution?"The first postings that followed dealt with additional questions about this issue. Otmar Foelsche however, had some suggestions:"Word X is not completely Unicode capable. Therefore, the characters with macrons that are available in the character palette cannot be copied correctly into a Word document. If you use TextEdit, which comes with OS-X, you can copy and paste the macrons and a multitude of other special characters in easily. They also print on standard printers..." Gabe Webster was able to explain the reason for this problem:"...Although OS X fully supports Unicode, an application written for OS X may or may not. Office X is a so-called"Carbonized" version of Office 2001, which means it is (almost) a straight port from the OS 9 version, which of course also doesn't support Unicode. I read a quote from a Microsoft spokesperson to the effect that their most important priority was to get any OS X-native version out the door, with Unicode compatibility waiting for the next release...As for the macrons, this means that you can't use the Unicode character

ina Word document. However, you can still use the pre-Unicode way of doing it, which is to find a special font that includes that character in it (Latvian, for example, uses macrons), use that font, and then don't ever open that document on a computer that doesn't have that font loaded on it. All things considered, I would use TextEdit, or one of the other Unicode-savvy OS X word processors (see *http://www.hclrss.demon.co.uk/unicode/ utilities_editors_macosx.html*)."Two messages with more resources came from Hawaii. Jeffrey Hayden wrote:"Have you tried PalPhon? *http://www.sil.org/computing/fonts/Lang/IPA.html* or a Hawaiian font? (see *http://www.oha.org/naoiwiolino/font.html* or *http:// www.uhh.hawaii.edu/~nhsi/kipuka/Hawaiianfonts.html*).The macron is a non-spacing character in both options ...." This message was followed by more suggestions from Keola Donaghy:"...The fonts provided here are similar to Helvetica, Times, Palatino and Courier, with the umlaut-vowel combinations replaced by macron-vowels. There are also pages describing the use of the macron vowels within Unicode-happy OS X applications, as well as a Jaguar-friendly keyboard layout for easy typing with our fonts (*http:// www.olelo.hawaii.edu/eng/resources/macosx.html* and *http:// www.olelo.hawaii.edu/eng/resources/osx/hifonts.html*).

The discussions of the Language Learning and Technology International (LLTI) listserver have been archived and posted on the web. These LLTI archives can be accessed from the IALLT Home page, which is located at *http://www.iall.org/*. A link to the LLTI listserver appears at the top level of the IALLT Home page. The LLTI listserver page gives instructions on how to subscribe or unsubscribe to the listserver. In addition, there is a link to the LLTI archives. These archives can also be accessed at *http://listserv.dartmouth.edu/archives/ llti.html*.

To search the archives, type the subject in the first search field. The search engine will match the subject with the subject headings of the archived messages. You may also type a key word or words in the second search field. This search will look for the key words in the body text of all messages. It the reference number that has been assigned to a discussion topic is entered in this field, the search will bring up a complete list of all discussions dealing with the topic. You may also want to restrict search by limiting it to a specific author or by entering beginning and ending dates. Such a restriction is particularly useful for searches on frequently occurring topics. Any questions or comments related to the LLTI listserver may be addressed to Otmar Foelsche, the moderator of the LLTI discussion list. Otmar can be contacted at otmar.foelsche@dartmouth.edu. ♦

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