

## IN OTHER JOURNALS

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Summaries of articles of interest to IALL members

**"Sending Foreign Language Word Processor Files over Networks,"** by Joseph A. Feustle, Jr., *Hispania* 75.5 (1992): 1376-1379

Despite the speed and power of networks such as the Internet and Bitnet, transmitting word processor documents via network has been problematic. The information pertaining to page layout, character formatting, and foreign language characters and diacritics is part of an eight-bit format common to word processing software. This information is lost when transferred in the seven-bit format that is the basis of much of existing networks. In the past, Mark D. Larsen has suggested that a writer substitute different binary key combinations for special formatting and diacritics. Thus, "á" would be converted to the two-character ASCII representation of ";a," and so on. The problem was that the sender needed to search for and replace all formatted text and foreign language characters with ASCII equivalents before sending a file over the network. Then the recipient would convert marked text back into the intended eight-bit equivalent. On the commercial side, Microsoft Corporation has developed Rich Text Format (RTF) to convert all the layout and format information for a *Word* file into seven-bit ASCII text that could then be transmitted over a network. *WordPerfect* uses Seven-Bit Transfer Format—part of its utility package, *Convert*—to encode a file as ASCII text. There are also translator programs available such as *Word for Word*. While

the software manufacturers have taken steps to address network file transfer, there is no universally accepted standard for file transfer on the network.

There is, however, a free means to transmit word processing documents via the network without relying on commercial file formats. This is accomplished through the Unix-to-Unix copy program usually referred to as UUENCODE/UUDECODE. Documents can be sent from Mac to Mac, PC to PC, or even between the Mac and PC platforms using UUENCODE/UUDECODE without loss of page layout, text formatting, or foreign language characters and diacritics. The only limitation is that your word processing or translator software must be able to read the file format of received documents. To transfer a file you only need a Unix-to-Unix encoding and decoding program for the Mac and the PC. A highly recommended program for the Mac is *UUTool*. *UUTool's* most noteworthy feature is that it allows the user to choose PC or Mac coding preferences to both encode and decode a file. You may also wish to examine *UULite*. For the PC, UUENCODE/UUDECODE software choices include *Toad*, *UUencode/UUdecode*, *UUxfer20*, and *UIDoall*. Of these, only *UUxfer20* has menus. The other PC software requires that the user type a single command at the DOS prompt to either encode or decode.

Large files should be compressed before encoding. Using a compression program

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(*Stuffit* and *Compressor* for the *Mac*, and *PKZip* for the PC) can reduce file size by 30 to 70%. Most of the encoding/decoding and compression software can be obtained from electronic bulletin boards, computer service departments, and from electronic archives on the network. The use of Unix encoding and decoding software should take us a step closer to true collaboration as users are no longer limited by distance or computer platform.

**"The Use of Synchronous Computer Networks in Second Language Instruction: A Preliminary Report,"** by Orlando R. Kelm, *Foreign Language Annals* 25.5 (1992): 441-454.

The article describes the author's use of a real time (synchronous) computer network, INTERCHANGE, at the University of Texas, Austin, in a Portuguese course for speakers of Spanish. Class sessions were held in a computer lab where each student was assigned to a computer, and responded to questions posed by the instructor and then to the responses of the other students; all responses appeared on each screen as soon as they were sent. Kelm reports increased participation over other types of class meetings, with 100-130 messages generated in a typical 50-minute session. Some students who were hesitant to participate orally in class became much more active in this environment. While the focus remained on content of the discussion, transcripts of sessions were later utilized to examine general patterns of error.

**"The Effect of Video Context on Foreign Language Learning,"** by Teresa Secules, Carol Herron and Michael Tomasello, *Modern Language Journal* 76.4 (1992): 480-490.

The authors discuss the rationale behind the use of authentic video materials in foreign language instruction and the scant

research on its effectiveness. They report on a comparative study done at Emory University of student progress in courses based on the video series *French in Action* and in more traditional (non-video) courses. The *French in Action* students scored dramatically better on listening comprehension and equally well on measures of reading and writing. The authors also measured the learning of individual structures, and found no overall significant differences between the *French in Action* group and the non-video group.

**"Rediscovering the Audio Language Laboratory: Learning Through Communicative Tasks,"** by Roberta Z. Lavine, *Hispania* 75.5 (1992): 1360-1367.

Lavine reports on the use of communicative tasks in the language lab at the University of Maryland at College Park. The author discusses negative perceptions of the audio lab: instructors associate it with audiolingual drill, exhibit anxiety toward manipulating the equipment, and require more appropriate materials than those commonly available; students find traditional exercises boring, and nerve-wracking due to lack of control over the speed of the delivery. Faculty at the University created activities based on Lee Ann Stone's *Task-Based Activities: A Communicative Approach to Language Laboratory Use*, activities which are described in detail. After six semesters of implementing this type of activity, Lavine reports an improvement in attitudes toward the lab. Students evaluated the activities as fun, rewarding, and "superior to a traditional lab exchange" (1364).

**"MLJ News & Notes of the Profession,"** by Gerard L. Ervin, *Modern Language Journal* 76.4 (1992): 526-528.

The column includes an extensive list of electronic newsletters and discussion groups dedicated to international and foreign language issues.