COURSEWARE REVIEWS

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This issue of the "Courseware Reviews" column features reviews of two Macintosh programs for reading foreign language texts, written by Dr. George Mitrevski, Coordinator of the Language Laboratory at Auburn University. Dr. Mitrevski points out in his review that "traditional computer programs for foreign language instruction have generally focused on developing grammar and vocabulary comprehension through a variety of exercises." However, Dr. Mitrevski reviews two programs "that may fill the gap in software for reading foreign language texts"—Transparent Language and Storyspace.

In the last issue of the *IALL Journal*, I promised to provide a list of criteria to be applied to all reviews. They are as follows:

1. Costs: individual, multi-volume, and site licensing options
2. All hardware requirements
3. Level of difficulty for installation
4. Quality of any supporting documentation/materials
5. The version tested, if applicable
6. Target learners
7. Quality of instructions for students
8. Design features
9. Level of teacher and class training required
10. Extent to which it is applicable to class work vs. self-study
11. How software was integrated into the course curriculum at your institution, if applicable
12. Level of effectiveness at meeting course objectives
13. Personal observations/comments.

In the next issue I will provide a brief overview of all the courseware exhibited and demonstrated at IALL '93. Speaking of IALL '93, I hope to see all of you in Lawrence, Kansas in June.

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TWO PROGRAMS FOR READING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEXTS

by Dr. George Mitrevski

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Traditionally, computer programs for foreign language instruction have generally focused on the development of grammar and vocabulary comprehension through a variety of exercises. Because reading lengthy authentic texts would seem to be primarily a passive skill, it is difficult to imagine how a computer can be helpful. Reading generally requires very little interaction, if any at all. Reading is also an individualized activity. Every reader approaches the text differently and acquires from the text different kinds of information. The case is not the same when working with grammar exercises, where uniformity in user response is mandatory. Thus, one gets the impression that computer technology is of little help in assisting students to enhance their reading skills. I suspect, however, the problem lies in the fact that our field has yet to develop a methodology that would make efficient use of the computer's capabilities in aiding students to develop reading skills.

In this review we examine two programs that may fill the gap in software for reading foreign language texts. The first, **Transparent Language**, is designed specifically for this purpose. The other, **Storyspace**, was originally designed as a tool for creating hypertexts; but because of its excellent and extensive features for accessing and manipulating text, it can easily be adapted for annotating and delivering foreign language readings.

Transparent Language

Transparent Language, Inc., 9 Ash Street, P.O. Box 575, Hollis, NH 03049. Telephone: 1-800-752-1767. Program price: DOS $119, Macintosh $139. Most titles are under $20. Version tested: Macintosh 1.04

Transparent Language consists of an Authoring Tool, a Program, and a Title. The Authoring Tool, which is not for sale, is used for authoring "titles" (i.e., texts). The Program is used for reading the titles. All **Transparent Language** titles are also recorded on audio cassette, which can be purchased separately. There are currently over 70 titles available in several languages including French, German, Spanish, Italian and Latin. New titles, some in additional languages, are being added continually. To develop a title, the company lends the Authoring Tool free of charge to a title developer (someone who is an expert in the target language), and the title becomes the property of Transparent Language, Inc. Title developers earn a small advance and a royalty. Transparent Language welcomes inquiries from qualified individuals interested in creating Transparent Language Titles.

The Transparent Language screen is divided into several information windows that can be moved, sized, hidden or revealed (see Figure 1). The original language text is located in a separate window. The other windows are titled **Word Meaning, Phrase Meaning, Sentence or Clause Meaning, Notes** and **Comments.** Because of the careful and consistent screen design, moving around a text is effortless. As you read the text, you can move around in the text window using the cursor keys or the scroll buttons. The cursor keys move one word at a time, highlighting each word. The program links every word in the text to grammar explanations, usage, dictionary entries, etc. Each of the other windows contains the appropriate information for the highlighted word or phrase. The amount of information displayed in each window varies with each

⌘ File   Find   Font   Size   Show   Help

Contes du Lundi	Comments
	Infinitive: avoir Imperfect Tense (Imparfait.)

CONTES DU LUNDI

LA DERNIERE CLASSE

RECIT D'UN PETIT ALSACIEN

Ce matin-là j'étais très-en retard pour aller à l'école, et
j'avais grand'peur d'être grondé, d'autant que M. Hamel nous avait
dit qu'il nous interrogerait sur les participes, et je n'en savais
pas le premier mot. Un moment l'idée me vint de manquer la
classe et de prendre ma course à travers champs.
Le temps était si chaud, si clair!
On entendait les merles siffler à la lisière du bois, et dans le
pré Rippert, derrière la scierie, les Prussiens qui faisaient
l'exercice. Tout cela me tentait bien plus que la règle des
participes; mais j'eus la force de résister, et je courus bien vite
vers l'école.

Word Meaning

I had

Phrase Meaning

I was very afraid

1-11

Sentence or Clause Meaning	Notes
That morning it was quite late before I started for school, and I was terribly afraid I should be scolded,	Idiom: avoir peur (to have fear) = to be afraid. J' = je before a vowel or silent h.

Figure 1. Information windows: Transparent Language.

title developer. The **Word Meaning** window usually displays the literal meaning of the word. When the word is part of an idiomatic phrase, the phrase is highlighted in the original text and is translated in the **Phrase Meaning** window. The **Sentence Meaning** window contains the literary translation of each sentence. In most cases actual published translations of the text are used for this function. The **Comments** window contains short grammatical information, such as infinitives of verbs. The **Notes** window contains longer grammatical explanations, notes on usage, and any other relevant information. Because the authoring tool is normally not available to the reader, the reader/instructor cannot change any of the glosses in the text. The text font in a window is the only thing that can be changed by the reader.

Transparent Language provides two excellent tools that can be of great help to a reader. The reader can search for a particular word in the entire text to see how the word is used in different contexts. This function can also be used for root searches, which are extremely helpful for finding inflected forms of a word. The other tool is a bookmark that the reader can set and search for in a subsequent reading session.

Although the company asserts in its advertisements that **Transparent Language** titles can be read by individuals who have no knowledge of the target language, and that the titles can be used for learning the target language, this really is not the case. The texts that are available at this time are primarily short stories from the classics in various languages. These are texts that in language courses we would introduce in the intermediate and advanced levels. **Transparent Language** texts are most appropriate for a reader who has at least a rudimentary knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary and usage of the target language. The program has an excellent authoring

template for glossing and annotating texts, and the availability of clear and concise glosses makes the reading process easier for the student. The titles that are currently available can be used very effectively in introductory literature courses taught in the target language. **Transparent Language** is a practical and easy-to-use program when used in a reading course to facilitate development of comprehension skills.

Storyspace

Eastgate Systems, Inc., P.O. Box 1307, Cambridge, MA 02238. Telephone: 800-562-1638. Price: $215; ten-pack: $599. Educational discounts available on single copy and ten-packs. Version tested: 1.12. Available only for the Macintosh.

Storyspace is a hypertext writing tool, whose concept is based on the **Intermedia** program developed at Brown University, where it has been used in a number of courses. To appreciate the power of **Storyspace** as a writing tool, one really has to be familiar with the concept of "hypertext" and with all of its possibilities. Many believe that the impact of hypertext on writing is quite similar to that of the printing press. While writing imitates the way we *speak* (in a linear mode), hypertext imitates the way we *think* and *learn*. Our thoughts, and what we learn, are actually small interlinked chunks of ideas. **Hypermedia** is an extension of hypertext, in that it incorporates all media of communication: text, sound and images. Hypermedia truly imitates the way we think: non-linearly and in multimedia.

Because hypertext and hypermedia are relatively new concepts, products using this platform have yet to enter the mainstream. In the past several years, however, industry has recognized the benefit of using hypermedia systems for developing train-

ing materials, so that products developed with multimedia authoring software such as Icon Author, Authorware, Toolbook and Guide are becoming more common.

Storyspace was developed strictly as a hypertext writing tool for interlinking texts and creating "webs" of ideas. The benefits of using **Storyspace** for presenting (and reading) foreign language texts in hypertext format will become obvious in the course of this review. A **Storyspace** document is composed of linked writing spaces. A writing space includes a title, space for writing text, and a place to put additional writing spaces. Writing spaces can be nested within each other without any limits. In a text space one can put text, graphics, sound and QuickTime movies. Text can be entered directly into the text space, or it can be imported from other programs, such as a word processing program.

The user has a choice of three ways to view information in **Storyspace**: map, chart or outline. The map view shows the links among writing spaces (see Figure 2). The chart and outline views show the nesting of the writing spaces. Links in **Storyspace** are used for interconnecting texts and writing spaces, and the reader has a choice of paths to follow from any place in a writing space. Links can also be used to connect text and graphics. A link can be given a name, so that it makes it easy to search for a particular link from anywhere in the document. The reader of a **Storyspace** document can change the entire document by adding or deleting both text and links, and the work can be extended in any direction.

There is no limit to the number of writing spaces and links that a **Storyspace** document can have. They can be in the thousands. **Storyspace** has utilities for searching and locating both writing spaces and links. Each text space can hold up to 32k of text, or about 5500 words. It is advisable to use a word processing program to create text because the text editor in **Storyspace** is not very versatile. **Storyspace** has automated conversion filters for importing text and graphics from existing sources. Imported texts preserve the font attributes of the original, but not the formatting.

Learning how to create links in **Storyspace** is relatively easy. It consists of selecting the *Link* tool and clicking on the **origin** and **destination** of the link. It is possible to anchor links from one writing space leading to several other writing spaces. **Storyspace** links can also be anchored to a specific text (word, phrase, sentence, etc.), or to a graphic inside a text space. Text links can be indicated in several ways. The developer may choose to use a unique font, or special symbols. The reader can find links by holding down the Command and Option keys. The text that has a link is surrounded by a box. The anchor of a link on a text remains with the text no matter where it is moved. Another type of writing tool in **Storyspace** is the *Note* tool, which is used for annotating texts. Annotations can contain graphics, text or additional writing spaces, and can be linked to text, graphics and to other writing spaces.

With **Storyspace** you can develop documents that can be read and changed by anyone who has access to the **Storyspace** program, or you can distribute them as stand-alone **Storyspace** readers. Stand-alone readers can be distributed without having to pay royalty to Eastgate Systems. There are several limitations in **Storyspace** readers. The tool bar in a reader has only three controls: Compass, Help and Navigate. Links in a reader cannot be changed, and only one writing space window can be opened at one time. Functionally, **Storyspace** readers are quite similar to documents created with **Transparent Language**.

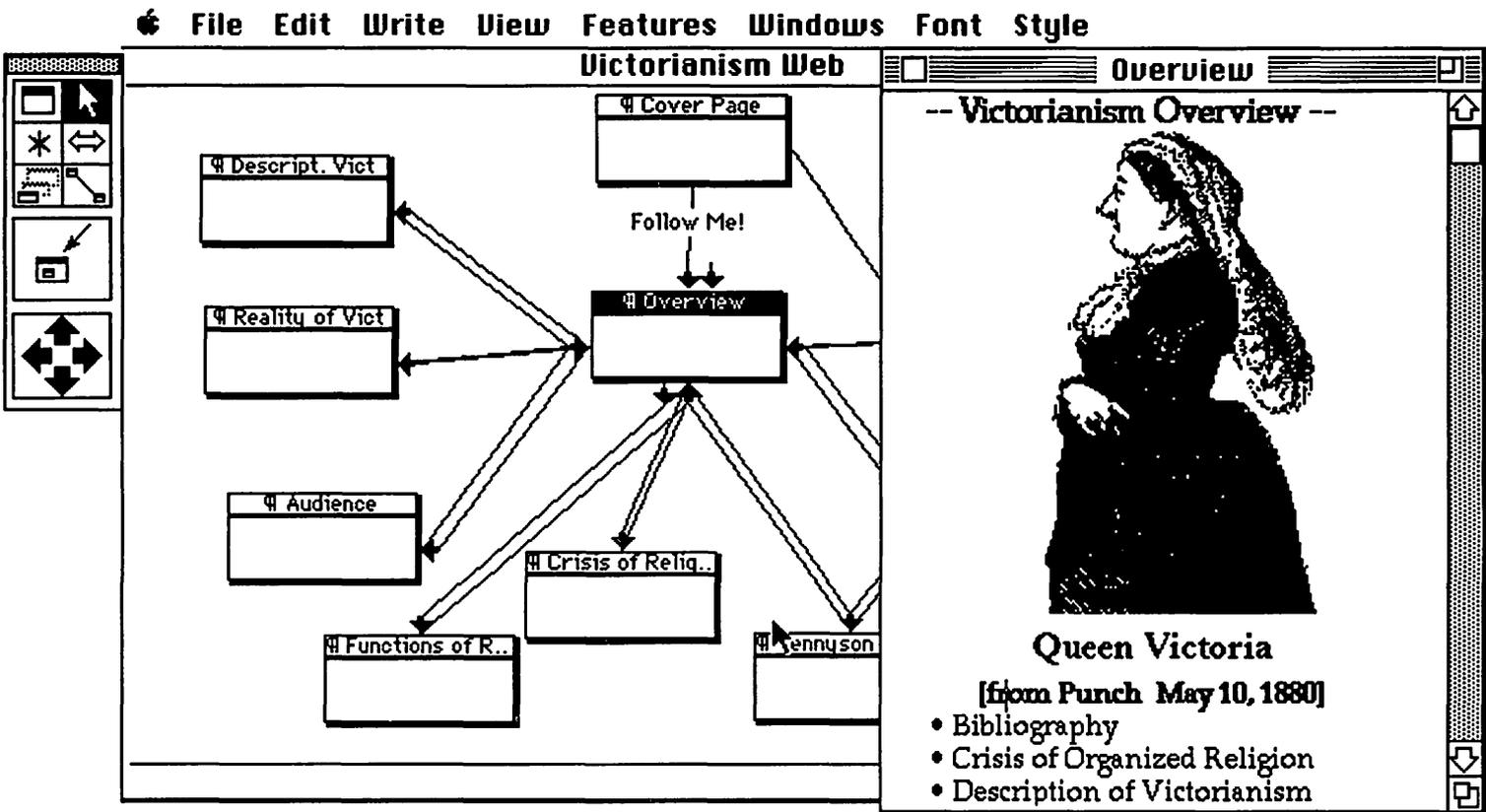**Storyspace** is perfect for delivering

⌘ File Edit Write View Features Windows Font Style

Victorianism Web

Overview

¶ Cover Page

¶ Descript. Vict

Follow Me!

¶ Reality of Vict

¶ Overview

¶ Audience

¶ Crisis of Relig..

¶ Functions of R..

¶ Tennyson

-- Victorianism Overview --

Queen Victoria

[from Punch May 10, 1880]

- Bibliography
- Crisis of Organized Religion
- Description of Victorianism

Figure 2. Storyspace map view.

hypertext information clearly and in an interactive format. Because the program offers a wealth of hyperlinking capabilities, it can be extremely useful for developing reading materials for foreign language learners. An author can begin a project by importing an existing text from a word processing document into a **Storyspace** document. The document can be presented to the student on several levels. If it is presented for reading comprehension purposes, you can annotate the text by providing translation for items (words, phrases, sentences, etc.) that you feel readers may find difficult. You may include as much, or as little, annotation as you feel is necessary. In addition to the translation, you can also include information about usage and grammar. If you would like to have the student look at additional examples and explanations, you can create a link between the annotation and another writing space containing the information. By adding a **guard field** to a link, you can prevent the student from continuing the reading until after he or she looks at a specific writing space. You can also create simple reading comprehension exercises for the student to complete at several intervals during the reading, or at the end. Because **Storyspace** does not have any answer-analysis utilities, the student would have to print out the answers and turn them in for grading.

If you are developing a document for advanced-level students, you would probably not include as many translation annotations, but instead might include extensive cultural annotations. If the subject matter deals with something that can be explained much easier with images, you can link any part of the text to a writing space containing graphics. To give you an example, I am now experimenting with **Storyspace** to present several poems by the Russian poet Alexandr Blok in hypermedia format. The poems are about art, and they deal with three famous architectural monuments: Hagia Sophia, Notre Dame and the Admiralty in St. Petersburg. I started with the text of a paper that I had written a long time ago as a graduate student. Analysis of the structure and meaning of each poem is presented in the form of links. Because there are numerous references in each poem to specific parts of the monuments, I scanned photographs of each monument, imported the graphics into the **Storyspace** document, and created links between items in the poems and the appropriate parts in the graphics.

Storyspace excels in developing hypermedia documents from texts that have rich subtexts. Because hypertext documents are dynamic, it is quite easy to get the reader/student involved in reading and expanding the hypertext. This is a program you would want to recommend to instructors who teach introductory level literature and culture courses in the target language. It is perfect for delivering linguistic and cultural information in an interactive format.

Eastgate Systems markets several **Storyspace** fiction and non-fiction readers, but none in a foreign language. The company welcomes inquiries from developers and is actively seeking both fiction and non-fiction.

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