

LLTI Highlights

David Pankratz
Loyola University Chicago

Introduction

Welcome again to "LLTI Highlights", a column featuring summaries of selected discussions which have taken place on the LLTI—the Language Learning and Technology International listserver. This electronic forum is used by an increasing number of language lab professionals to discuss issues relevant to their everyday work. For information on how to subscribe to the LLTI, see the end of this column.

The discussions summarized here have been paraphrased; any omissions, errors or misinterpretations are mine. For each topic, the number cited in parentheses was assigned by Otmar Foelsche, LLTI moderator. This number can be used to facilitate a search of that topic in the LLTI archive.

Regarding housekeeping, Otmar has asked me to include this important note about re-distribution lists: Please do not set up a so-called automatic re-distribution list for LLTI on your own campus. These lists cause a lot of problems with returned mail going back to the LLTI editor rather than to the originator of the re-distribution list.

The topics selected for this issue's column all deal with a common theme, although the discussions occurred at different times over the past several months. Each discussion addresses a concern of lab directors and foreign language teachers, which, perhaps simplified, goes something like this: "Given the numerous technologies available to us, which do we choose to construct the ideal language laboratory?" Let's see what you, the experts, had to say.

The Future of Language Learning and Technology (#2116), July/ August 1995

This discussion originated with a question posed by Ken Pratt of Heinle & Heinle Publishing Company. He asked, "I'm interested in getting a sense of where people think technology and language learning [are] going in the next 10 years or so. Obviously, CD-ROM based materials are now quickly becoming the rage as [is] more easy-to-use authoring software for the teacher who wants to create for themselves. But where do you think language learning and technology will be in the next 5 years? 10 years?"

"Given the numerous technologies available to us, which do we choose to construct the ideal language laboratory?"

"'Textbooks' will be software tutorials that...will be delivered through networks...."
(Sharon Scinicariello,
Case Western Reserve
University)

Sharon Scinicariello's response to this question was very engaging and certainly generated much of the discussion that followed. I have reprinted most of her response here:

Just had a conversation with our V-P for Information Services about where we will be next year. Thinking about 5 or 10 years down the road is probably impossible. This is where CWRU [Case Western Reserve University] is going for learning:

- all students will have multimedia laptop computers (the Med School already does this; all students here have computers but not laptops) that they will carry everywhere;
- students will use these computers to access information for individual and group learning no matter what their location is on campus or off (the off-campus access is now through SLIP, but negotiations with telephone companies and cable systems are on-going);
- students will be taught to use these information resources for learning (this is the tricky part);
- faculty members will be coaches and information resources, perhaps developing materials.

What does this mean for language learning?

- 'Textbooks' will be software tutorials that (1) teach students to use authentic materials accessed through their computers, (2) provide collections of materials for specific learning tasks, (3) provide contextualizing information for certain kinds of authentic materials, and (4) provide tools--dictionaries, reference books--to help students use authentic materials.
- These software tutorials will be delivered through networks, i.e., students will not buy textbooks as they do now. A publishing/royalty system for on-line 'textbooks' will have to be installed. This may be a combination of site-licensing by institutions (a 'library' model in which students may access the information but not copy it) and on-line distribution for a fee to those students who want or need to possess the 'text'.
- All 'textbooks' are, of course, multimedia. They will probably also contain links to other materials available through international networks.

"[An] emphasis on content of material as opposed to the medium for delivery surfaced repeatedly throughout the discussion.

- Individual students will use these materials to (a) practice language skills, (b) gather information about the topics they are studying—language, literature, culture, (c) prepare for content-based interactions with other students and faculty members.
- Small groups will work with these materials as they practice collaborative skills—speaking, writing.
- Classroom instruction will focus on higher-level skills in both language learning and content; e.g., hypothesizing, debating, negotiating in the target language about specific content-based tasks.

A minus for publishers: the need to rethink the notion of "textbook" and how their materials are developed and marketed. A plus for publishers: the possibility of expanding markets beyond the traditional classroom setting and enrollment. The materials I envision would be of great interest to anyone interested in life-long learning, language in a "real-life" context, etc.

David Ben-Nahum responded to Sharon, "You said...it is impossible to think 5 or 10 years down the road, so you only make plans for next year. Does this mean that next year the students at CWRU will not use printed textbooks...?" He added that her scenario seemed more like 20 years away to him. Sharon replied that indeed students at CWRU would be using textbooks next year, although the medical school there has already begun distributing materials over the network. She emphasized that her response was flavored by the fact that she was attempting to move away from the idea that CD-ROMs represent advanced technology. She wrote, "The multimedia 'texts' being created by groups here and elsewhere reside on servers and are not distributed but accessed." She also stressed that the content of what we deliver is far more important than the means. This emphasis on content of material as opposed to the medium for delivery surfaced repeatedly throughout the discussion.

CD-ROM Materials

Along slightly different lines, Dana Paramskas had recently visited a software store and seen a CD-ROM program advertising speech recognition. She made the following observations:

"...readers agreed that no CD-ROM programs have been developed which can substitute for a teacher of a class; the programs are best as supplements, not teachers."

1) If I were a parent (of the privileged class, with access to computers and [CD-ROM]), I would opt for this [type of program] in preference to classes offered to beginners, lower intermediate [students], as a much more efficient initial tool for language learning. Not to mention that the product would be permanently available as contrasted to the rather ephemeral status of a credit course for beginning [and] lower intermediate language.

2) While there is no doubt that language learning beyond this level cannot be well handled outside of the normal classroom, with feedback from a competent teacher, a multimedia package such as the one mentioned might well be seen as more effective than the usual academic-based one.

There are multiple issues at stake here, and I hope that listmembers will contribute to the discussion: language learning divorced from the academic setting, etc.

Advice to the publishers? Hmm... Produce beginner multimedia packages of the highest quality; allow institutions to use them through reasonably priced site-licenses; look into programs which allow language teachers to easily use and adapt World Wide Web materials into their curricula for levels above beginner [and] lower intermediate; produce CD-ROM materials which can be edited, downloaded to labs or individuals, to be form-fitted to each teacher's needs.

Lauren Rosen countered that she had searched but found no CD-ROM programs which could provide the material, flexibility and feedback necessary to develop well-rounded language skills. Several other readers agreed that no CD-ROM programs have been developed which can substitute for a teacher of a class; the programs are best as supplements, not teachers. Phillip Mahnken wrote, "I believe that...the inspiration and the means for learning language(s) is purposeful interaction.... There is so much to organic interaction that the digital world just cannot deal with that.... for language learning to go totally on-line or on-disk should only be thought of where access to face-to-face teaching and learning is unfeasible."

Despite the drawbacks he mentioned, Mahnken commented on one positive aspect of computerized instruction: "I think that 'full voice recognition' will be with us all in the next decade. The work of Lelouche and Mathews and others

(in *Speech Recognition*, Vol. 5 No. 4 1994) makes me believe principled, simulated interaction for language learning, and many other fields will be quite feasible. It'll be fun to talk to HAL from 2001."

Writing in support of CD-ROM technology as an important tool for language learning (especially for beginners in a language), Ken Butler stated, "There are a number of ways in which a person can attempt to achieve this initial level of competence, but on the basis of 39 years of personal language learning and facilitating other[s] in learning to speak a second language,...I am certain that aural/oral, or what I call 'hear and speak', repetitive practice is one fail-safe approach, and that CD-ROM technology offers a highly efficient and rapid way to do this...."

**Modernizing
Language Labs
(#2291), October
1995**

"Several readers voiced the opinion that although audio tape will continue to be very useful for many years to come, lab planners might nevertheless consider omitting the audio console, which is the most expensive, the most vulnerable to technical problems, and often the least used component of the audio lab."

Lisa Algazi posed a big question, one that anyone investing in a new lab would want to ask:

"Has anyone ever addressed the question of whether audio-based...labs will soon be obsolete? ...it seems to me that more and more language teaching materials will be produced on CD-ROM or other computerized format rather than audio tape, which then may go the way of the 8-track tape. Is it realistic...to spend money on a new audio-based lab with console in 1995? or will it be hopelessly antiquated in five to ten years?"

Several readers voiced the opinion that although audio tape will continue to be very useful for many years to come, lab planners might nevertheless consider omitting the audio console, which is the most expensive, the most vulnerable to technical problems, and often the least used component of the audio lab. Some quotes on consoles:

"It now sits, gathering dust, in a corner."

"We do not use a console, don't have one, don't want one."

"Why shouldn't we get rid of our analog console, our moldering tape media...?"

Dennis Magnuson elaborated on the set-up now used by his and many schools, the "library lab". These labs are not available for scheduling instruction for an entire class, but rather are open to all students for individualized work. With the increase in video and computer media, several or even most of the lab's workstations are set up for that type of work as opposed to audio.

Judy Shoaf countered with a list of reasons why console audio labs are still in wide use at her institution. She explained that her three labs are in demand by instructors, that they offer flexibility since the audio stations can be converted to

video viewing stations, and that they are used extensively for testing.

Push for Digital

In a provocative push for digital, Ed Harvey asked, "Would many of these 'console' problems be obviated with a digital system/'Big Honkin Server-kind-of-a-Thing' like the Cheetah that was demo'ed at NEALL [Northeast Association of Learning Laboratories] recently?"¹ Charles Fenton speculated on the advantages of a digital lab. The number of "booths" in the lab would become irrelevant. Students could work in other locations and at any time of day or night. Audio and video quality is superior. And what about mechanical breakdowns? He writes, "Modern digital servers, working on RAID [Reduced Array of Inexpensive Disks] storage technology, are rarely out of service and there are few mechanical problems. Also, because it is digital technology, the same technical support personnel that service the other servers on campus can now service the media lab, thereby cutting the cost of all that specialized technical help." He emphasized his belief that digital video, in particular, will dominate the market very soon.

"Ursula Williams stated unequivocally, '[Needs analysis] may be the single most important factor in the decision of how to renovate a lab. What will people use?'"

In defense of audio, Judy Shoaf explained, "I was not arguing that an audio console is the wave of the future, only that it is important in some places today." Also, she sees longevity of systems as a criterion for selection: "Our 1987 computer lab is not, like the 1987 audio lab, state of the art; if we got funding to install the top-of-the-line Cheetah with Tarzan in tow tomorrow, in 2001 it would be outdated and the audio lab would still be (almost) the best AUDIO lab money can buy." Read Gilgen offered his support: "I'll second your comments, Judy. While we need to continually explore how technology can do a better job for us, we shouldn't be throwing out tried and true that already does work. (Something about babies and bathwater?) <grin>"

Several readers reminded us of the necessity of planning any type of lab in close conjunction with the faculty. Mike Ledgerwood stated, "The real answer [in planning a lab] has to come from your faculty and their pedagogical goals and aims as well as from the type of support you and your campus can give." Ursula Williams stated unequivocally, "[Needs analysis] may be the single most important factor in the decision of how to renovate a lab. What will people use?" She has observed that at her school, for example, the "computer revolution" has been slow taking hold in the foreign languages. She concludes, "You might have to take your lumps either way. We don't have data to show one or the other lab type to be superior. You have to do what fits your situation."

**New Language
Lab...maybe
(#2480),
December/January
1995/96**

"Jeff Neufeld wrote that he...spent a lot of time reviewing state-of-the-art technology... and then trying to determine how it could supplement the language program his institution. He explained that...he would have been better off first determining needs, and then shopping for suitable equipment."

Judy Shoaf referred to one of her previous postings (see above) and explained her new situation:

A few LLTI'ers may remember me from a posting last summer about the importance of audio labs.... Well, I am now trying to digest my own words, since the administration is calling (sort of) for multimedia in the language lab. Of course, if we can get a good facility, I'll be glad to eat any crow necessary! The most likely thing is that we'll just get an upgraded computer lab and move the audio booths; but there is an interest in the administration in seeing proposals for a much better set-up. One important administrator wants to see the faculty here developing their own multi-media programs (possibly to market, linguistic Gatorade).

The faculty resents moving the lab (the new site will be less convenient and probably much less attractive) and resents even more being asked by the administration to imagine a desirable language center that probably won't materialize. I am the designated person to try to imagine the lab of the future, by default.

Could I hear from any of you who have recently installed multimedia labs or done some thinking, whether realized or not, about the language learning center of the near future? What technologies and designs did you adopt or reject? How is the lab related to the language classrooms (& how are they ideally equipped) and to the rest of the university's networks?

Several readers replied that they were or had been in a similar situation, and wrote to share their experiences, including mistakes they had made in planning for a new lab.

Jeff Neufeld wrote that he had first spent a lot of time reviewing state-of-the-art technology to see what it could do, and then trying to determine how it could supplement the language program at his institution. He explained that this was backwards—he would have been better off first determining needs, and then shopping for suitable equipment. Also, he pointed out, "I can't emphasize [enough] how important it is to get all the teachers on board at this needs analysis stage. Nobody needs a lab which teachers don't want to use." He elaborated that their needs were: 1) non-roman-character word processing (Japanese, etc.); 2) WWW access area for both EL and FL programs; and 3) development of course-

specific EL materials. Regarding this last need, he commented that he has seen very few good commercially available multimedia materials, and that it takes several hundred hours of development time for each usable hour of product. He continued, "So we need more release time and more staff. Will we get it?" He posed other questions related to planning a new lab, such as: "Who will train staff and students in using the lab? Who will maintain the equipment? Who will do the scheduling and other administrative work? Is the lab open access or supervised?" The immediate result of his study was this: "Finally, I've recommended that we do NOT get the lab now as we are unable to clearly state what our needs are or whether it would be used. Probably, will do so next year, once these issues are clarified."

Robert Bareikis gave his perspective on audio labs versus multimedia labs. He said that from experience gained both teaching and observing students he believed that multimedia labs have more potential for motivating students than do traditional audio labs, and thus should be a better investment. From an administrative perspective; however, he raised this dilemma:

*"[Mark Lewis wrote]
'In our case, the
faculty have spelled
out the desire to
incorporate not just
multimedia applica-
tions, but [also]
materials for self-
study and proficiency
testing.... '"*

As for location, we will have to wrestle with that question as well. Our language faculty have a brand-new language lab adjacent to their offices, so we will have to ask ourselves whether it makes sense to install a multimedia lab in the same building when there are other departments and other faculty who are not so well served. In addition, a very expensive multimedia lab (typically several hundred thousand dollars) would be a[n]...innovation for us, hence a facility that would serve everyone and not just one department. That speaks, perhaps, for a facility that is convenient for everyone and not just one department. This requires the affected department to ask itself whether such a lab means the glass is half full or half empty when it weighs inconvenience against having the use of a new and probably quite exciting facility in a different location.

Finally, Mark Lewis offered reinforcement for how critical it is to have faculty involved in planning when choosing technologies. He mentioned that at his school, this faculty input had resulted not only in a desire for new equipment and materials, but for a change in the curriculum! He wrote, "In our

case, the faculty have spelled out the desire to incorporate not just multimedia applications, but materials for self-study and proficiency testing to tailor this future center to meet their needs. The planning has gone hand in hand with the complete revision of our proficiency requirement."

Closing out this topic, Judy Shoaf thanked everyone for their responses. We wish you luck, Judy. Get those teachers to do some thinking....

The LLTI Archive

All discussions which have taken place on the LLTI have been archived. This archive is a valuable and time-saving research tool. There are various ways to access the archive:

1) Listserv commands. You can retrieve the actual files by sending commands via email directly to the listserv: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu To get a list of the archive files, send mail to the listserv with the contents: INDEX LLTI This will return a list of files which are the monthly archives. To request a particular month's archive, send the command: SEND LLTI LOGyymm After downloading one or more of these monthly archives, you can search them for particular words or topics using your own search tools, such as the "find" or "search" features in any standard word-processing program.

2) Gopher. Conduct a Gopher search through these menus in this order:

- "Other Gopher Servers" (or some similar rubric—in other words, Gopher servers other than the one you are using locally)

-North America

-USA

-New Hampshire

-Dartmouth College

-Research Resources

-The Humanities

-International Association of Learning Labs

-LLTI Archive

At this point, chose one of the files, such as LLTI_1700-1799. This will bring up all those files which had the topic numbers 1700-1799.

3) FTP. The archive is also available via anonymous FTP to [ftp.dartmouth.edu/pub/LLTI-IALL](ftp://ftp.dartmouth.edu/pub/LLTI-IALL) You can download the "stuffed" versions (condensed files—for Macintosh users) of all messages up to topic #2399. Messages can be downloaded in either stuffed or normal uncondensed form (text or ASCII).

4a) World Wide Web (WWW). Go to the Dartmouth homepage at URL <http://www.dartmouth.edu> Link through these items:

- Organizations
- Language Resource Center
- LLTI-IALL Folder
- LLTI Archive

4b) WWW. Go to the IALL homepage at URL <http://eleazar.dartmouth.edu/IALL/> which will also access LLTI. As with Gopher and FTP, WWW access will present the files grouped by topic number.

How to Subscribe to LLTI

First, you must have access to Internet so that you can use electronic mail. Your email ID and hostname, which become your email address, must be obtained from your institution's computing services department.

To subscribe to the LLTI, send an electronic message to the listserv address. Use your name in the subscribe message:

To: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu

Subject:

Message: SUB LLTI John A. Doe

When your message is received, the listserver will respond with a message describing various basic procedures. You can now begin receiving messages posted by the other users.

Postings to the LLTI may not be sent to the listserv address, but must be sent to: LLTI@dartmouth.edu To start a new topic, send your message to this address. You can respond to a discussion in progress by sending a reply to a posting on that topic.

If you want to unsubscribe or simply stop mail while you are away from the office, use the SIGNOFF command. (You do not need to give your name.)

To: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu

Subject:

Message: SIGNOFF LLTI

To learn more about the LLTI, send a message REVIEW LLTI.

Important! Please do not set up a so called automatic re-distribution list for LLTI on your own campus. These lists cause a lot of problems with returned mail going back to the LLTI editor rather than to the originator of the re-distribution list.

If you have problems using LLTI, you may send an email message directly to Otmar Foelsche, list moderator, at otmar.foelsche@dartmouth.edu or contact a fellow LLTIer!

'The Cheetah is a powerful Windows-based server, and is one component of a system designed to distribute digitized sound and video (MPEG1) to workstations in a lab setting. For more information, contact Charles Fenton at (800) 733-2787 or visit his homepage at <http://www.rovers.net/~ren/langlab.html>

David Pankratz is the Director of the Language Learning Resource Center, Loyola University Chicago.

Computer Assisted Language Learning

An International Journal

Editor:

Keith Cameron, School of Modern Languages, The University, Exeter, England

Audience:

Teachers and researchers, linguists, computer scientists, psychologists, and educationalists.

Aims and Scope:

Computer Assisted Language Learning is an international journal which leads the field in its total dedication to all matters associated with the use of computers in language learning (L1 and L2). It provides a forum to discuss the discoveries in the field and to exchange experience and information about existing techniques. The scope of the Journal, by its very definition, embraces a multitude of disciplines.

- Areas covered:
- Pedagogical principles and their applications
 - Second Language Research
 - Cognitive Modelling
 - Observations on, and evaluation of, CALL software
 - Intelligent Tutoring Systems
 - Digitised versions of Video and Audio
 - Application of AI to language teaching
 - Computer assisted translation
 - Computer assisted composition
 - Multi-lingual systems
 - Simulated-active learning environments

ISSN 0958-8221

1995, volume 8, 4 issues

Price

Institutions Dfl. 286,00

Individuals Dfl. 126,00

Volumes 1-7 are available from the publisher

Please send/fax your order, or free sample copy request to:



Swets & Zeitlinger

P.O. Box 825

2160 SZ Lisse

the Netherlands

Tel. (+31) 2521-35111, Fax (+31) 2521-15888