

VANCE STEVENS



CALL-IS

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REVIEWS OF SELECTED TESOL 1987 SESSIONS ON COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Writing and Revising with Computers in ESL Composition

Marianne Phinney described a pilot project conducted at the University of Texas at El Paso in which university-level ESL students used word processors in a process-approach freshman composition class. In this project, the students' hand-written, in-class first drafts were compared to the final papers which were typed on word processors, and the results indicated that there was a significant increase in (1) the length of the papers, (2) the quality of the writing (as indicated by the percentage of error-free T-units), and (3) the students' attitudes toward writing in general and towards using word processors in particular. The presenter described the composition class and the way in which the students were introduced to the word processors.

Overall, the descriptions of the project and of the writing class were interesting and informative. Although there was nothing particularly innovative about the project, the presentation offered a good overview of using word processors for writing. The quality of the research was weakened by the absence of a control group, and it is likely many of the advantages that were attributed to the use of word processors could also be attributed to other factors. The presentation did, however, include other advantages to using word processors which are more difficult to quantify, such as the ease of revising and of reading the printed copy, and the usefulness of knowing how to use a word processor.

Review by **Katherine E. Muhlhausen**
Utah Technical College at Salt Lake

Communicative Approaches in Computer-Assisted Language Instruction

Jannie J. Both of the University of Stellenbosch read what was essentially a position paper on communicative approaches to CALI. Commencing with remarks on the deficiencies of the traditional language lab and the ways in which behavioristic methodologies had carried over into courseware development, the presenter echoed the conception of the computer as tutor, tool, tutee. He then discussed his five principles of communicative CALI encapsulated in the following statements:

(1) know what you are doing, (2) the whole is more than the sum of its parts, (3) process is as important as forms, (4) to learn it, do it, and (5) mistakes are not always mistakes. The presenter then gave as examples of communicative software "The Factory" and "The Pond" (Sunburst), but he also noted that with such software communication among students is often at the level of minimal utterances. The presenter then said that artificial intelligence "promised" improvements in communicative CALI that would make possible developments such as expert systems and software that takes into account individual learning styles. The presenter concluded that available software was "unacceptable" and that we were only "starting to scratch the surface" with communicative CALI.

Interactive Video in the Teaching of English

The advantages and disadvantages of interactive video were presented by Brian Hill of Brighton Polytechnic who also presented data from a related research project on interactive video. Hill noted that interactive video (1) stimulates, excites, and motivates, (2) provides opportunities to be creative, (3) broadens horizons and extends contacts, (4) leads to a variety of further activities, (5) responds to individual needs, (6) extends to other learning situations, and (7) appeals to a technologically sophisticated

In this first effort by Research Design Associates, the most interesting elements include (1) the concept of having an inexpensive interface that drives the tape in synchronization with the activity on the screen, and (2) the publisher's desire to enlist expert ESL teachers in preparing additional scenarios, scripts, and tests. This prototype lesson is rather pedestrian, and the accompanying recording is marred with intonation problems and poorly selected vocabulary (in addition to the inclusion of a strong regional dialect); however, the package does clearly show what can be done easily and inexpensively with the material provided.

Despite these shortcomings, I would recommend the program to teachers using Apples because (1) it would be quite useful when used in conjunction with appropriate activities, (2) the quality of the tape could be improved by teachers, and (3) it would be easier to design better lessons and submit these to the publisher after determining the good and bad features of the program as a result of student use. (The publisher would respond to this kind of input.) I think the lessons themselves would have considerable appeal to students with listening comprehension problems and to beginners of all ages and backgrounds. Finally, as the lessons are extremely easy to use, they could also serve as a useful introduction to CALL.

Review by Macey B. Taylor
Tucson, Arizona

BOOK REVIEW

Working with Computers: Computer Orientation for Foreign Students by Michael Barlow. Stanford CA: Athelstan.

Although I do not know all there is to know about computers, I know much more about them than I can suffer to read in the average introduction-type text; it was, therefore, not without misgivings that I undertook to read Michael Barlow's book explaining computers to foreign students. Once into it, my misgivings disappeared, and I found that I was enjoying the book because *Working with Computers* is comprehensive, informative (I learned several things I had not previously known), clearly organized, and agreeably presented in a relaxed, conversational tone that is in no way patronizing.

The book is organized around two major sections: computers and computer tools in general, and uses of computers to accomplish specific academic tasks (e.g., conducting library searches and writing research papers). In the former category are chapters dealing

separately with getting around in mainframes and in microcomputers. There are also chapters about word processing, computer-based communications, databases, and spreadsheets. These issues are dealt with first in overview, but each case is illustrated with specific examples of the way in which sessions on computers might be conducted.

While the chapters on the "basics" of computers spare us the detailed discussion of computer anatomy so often found in other introductory tomes, the chapters on academic uses of computers do resort to discussing "basics" more appropriate to the foreign student audience. In these chapters, discussion of the way in which computers can be used in library searches is preceded by an overview of resources available in a typical college library and a description of the way in which searches are organized. Accordingly, the section on using computers to write research papers (data base manipulation and idea processing, in addition to word processing and formatting programs) is preceded by sections on taking and organizing notes, developing a thesis, and avoiding plagiarism; other sections cover topics quite pertinent to foreigners facing the daunting task of writing research papers in American or British institutions of higher learning.

In dealing with note taking and similar topics, the author is obviously directing his book at strangers to the American and British academic systems; furthermore, on page 206, the cautionary note that encyclopedias "simplify ... too much for work at the graduate level" provides the only overt clue in the book to the author's actual intended audience; however, it is obvious to this reviewer that, despite the author's numerous attempts to redefine and rephrase, this book, unavoidably, is going to be comprehensible only to foreign students possessing very advanced levels both in English and in study skills. Thus is raised the question: For whom is this book actually intended? It is clear from the publisher's accompanying literature that this book stems from the author's having taught courses on this subject. It is unfortunate that the inherent bias, and one fixed firmly in the book title, is toward foreign students because this book would appeal strongly to at least three other audiences. One audience would be native-speaking students about to leave high school or to begin university careers; they would benefit greatly from the knowledge imparted by the author and from the clarity and simplicity of his presentation. Another audience, and one which this book might actually reach, would be graduate students in ESL programs who might need to advise international students about using computers. For such students, the book not only has all the essentials they need to become computer literate them-

selves, but it models a manner of presentation that could be emulated in effectively imparting these skills to international students not able to read the book themselves. Still a third group who would benefit greatly from reading and having a copy of this book on their shelves are all the practicing ESL teachers who have always meant to find out about computers but who somehow have never yet managed to find the time to do so. For such teachers who are in need of information concerning the potential of computers tools (e.g., word processors, database managers, spreadsheets, electronic mail and bulletin boards, and library search programs), this book would prove an excellent introduction. I think that all of these secondary audiences would appreciate the explanations that start from square one as much as they would the walk-throughs of sample sessions the author asks readers to imagine being performed on a computer.

Coming to grips with the scope of a book on this subject must have been no easy task; nevertheless, Michael Barlow has managed to include enough information on the many topics covered for the book to be quite practical. He has not neglected to give the overview. For international students there are whole units on the study skills that are needed before work with computers can even be considered. I think this would be an excellent book for graduate international students, American or British high school and undergraduate students, and all their respective teachers. Ironically, I think the book is beyond the grasp of the average international student, but only in terms of the language used, not the concepts dealt with. If I had students I felt (1) could read and understand this material, and (2) had access to some of the software mentioned, I would not hesitate to recommend this book to them.

Review by **Vance Stevens**
Sultan Qaboos University

SURVEY PROJECT OF ESL SOFTWARE

Bruce Carrick
Portland State University

A report published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory surveys fifty commercially available ESL software programs. The project was designed to highlight those programs produced after 1983 with a language focus which ESL teachers could use to stimulate student interaction. A separate report on word processing software was published in a quarterly report by the Lab in February of 1987.

Copies of the report can be obtained at cost from the duplicating services of the Technology Program / Northwest Regional Educational Lab / One Main Place / Portland, OR 97203.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

VESL CAI

Carolyn Keith
(Maricopa Technical Community College)
Peter Lafford
(Mesa Community College)

The Arizona Department of Education's Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) Curriculum Project developed Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) for Limited English Proficient (LEP) learners in high-demand occupational areas. Building on Activity Manuals and flash cards, created in earlier phases of the Project, VESL staff used the Apple (tm) SuperPILOT authoring language and Apple IIe/IIc microcomputers to develop software that assists the limited English proficient learner with the technical and sub-technical language of certain vocational areas. During an eight-month period, VESL staff completed CAI modules in Auto Mechanics and Food Services. A third module, Nursing Assistant, was also begun.

The software was designed to provide the LEP learner with supplemental instruction that would facilitate the student's progress in required vocational classes. The focus of the software is vocabulary comprehension, taught by means of contextual definitions, exercises and tests. Technical theory, taught in the vocational class, is not stressed in the CAI lessons.

A microcomputer survey of vocational institutions nationwide showed that 44 of the 73 responding institutions have Apple IIe or IIc microcomputers. Forty institutions indicated that at least some of their microcomputers had two disk drives. The survey confirmed that Apple dominated the educational marketplace. The Apple IIe/IIc was, thus, chosen for software development.

One of the Project's primary goals was to produce effective vocabulary reinforcement lessons that also retain a student's interest for a long period of time. Because of the way SuperPILOT handles program storage, it was necessary to have two disk drives to accomplish software development.