

# APACALL NEWSLETTER



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Attachment B

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## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **Using IT to Improve Language Teaching:**

#### **Collected Papers of 2002 JALT Kyoto Chapter Annual Conference**

Gillis-Furutaka, A., Hackshaw, P., Kitao, K. Nagano, T. Shiki, O. (Eds.). (2002). JALT Kyoto Chapter, Doshisha University Computer Research Group: Kyoto, Japan.

Reviewed by Maiko Hata

#### *Introduction*

This collection of papers is a well-done representation of the many useful presentations that were given at the 2002 JALT Kyoto Chapter Annual Conference. As Kenji Kitao mentions in the preface, the presenters came not only from different parts of Japan but also from different parts of the world. Such diverse population gives this collection of papers a variety of points of view about "Using IT to Improve Language Teaching", the theme of this conference.

In the following sections, I would like to briefly introduce the different aspects of classroom IT usage that were presented in the various reports and studies in this collection.

### *Teachers' Resources on the Internet*

Several papers offered insight about where teachers can find resources on the Internet. For teachers' resources on the Internet, in his article, "Internet Sites in 20 Fields that I recommend to English Language Teachers", Kenji Kitao has a wide range of website suggestions in his paper. He made this paper practical and useful by including not only obvious items such as sites with quizzes and tests for students, but also sites with information on copy right laws which is a new concept for many of us. In another article, Kelly provides a thorough introduction to the Internet TESL Journal, a website that has been publishing a lot of practical research since 1995. This website, as Kelly states, has "...materials for ESL/EFL teachers such as online textbooks, classroom game and activity ideas". These papers that offer numerous website addresses that language teachers might use could be the place to turn to when we need help on the Internet.

### *Designing IT/Language Courses*

A number of papers offer tips about designing syllabi that incorporate IT. For example, the paper by Hata & Shirai suggests the curriculum design method based on the classes they have taught. They give a list of easy-to-follow steps that introduce the idea of curriculum design for such courses. Kumar's "Improving Language Teaching with the Web", by showing the history of the Internet and general ideas for different educational purposes, might be a good start for novice teachers too. A paper by Okada, Yamamoto & Nishinoh gives a general idea on how computers can be used to help students in writing, reading, and listening. They describe how they have used IT for these different skill areas showing their syllabi, websites, and the techniques they used to create their own materials.

For teachers who have some specific goals or materials they would like to use, the following papers could be helpful. If you are thinking about using PowerPoint as a main computer component, Johnson has a report on how she integrated group work, PowerPoint, and social issues. By including the assignments and assessment tools she used in her course, Johnson made this report very informative and practical. Also the paper by Nishinoh has very practical ideas on how to teach current English using various sites such as the LexisNexis Database and dictionary sites. Stoeckel gives practical suggestions on how to use Internet-based questionnaires which can be a window on different cultures using free services. He reports how he implemented the course by setting up the questionnaire and using it as a tool for students to learn not only about the world, but also about the research process.

For anyone who uses the Internet, Kathleen Kitao has practical suggestions on using and teaching with the Internet efficiently and cautiously. She describes the Internet as "... a vast resource that lacks organization..." and which is sometimes not "...reliable and accurate" (p.77). She shares her suggestions on search engines, directories, and how to evaluate individual pages on your own.

### *Reports on Commercially Available Materials*

There are several papers that reported ways to integrate commercially available programs for those who are thinking about using such programs at Japanese schools. Yasunami reports on how some commercially available CALL programs are used at Kumamoto

University. Also, Tanaka reports on the usage of a program for Sougou teki na Gakushu, or "Synthetic Learning Time" at a junior high school. Horiuchi describes a short course that used Internet Navigware which offers various courses and authoring system.

A remarkable similarity of these three papers is that all of them reported preferable outcomes and high evaluations from students. This is a very encouraging finding for those of us who are thinking about implementing such programs.

#### *IT, English & Something Else*

There are some interesting papers that not only discuss how IT in classrooms can promote students' learning English and the target culture, but also how it can be valuable in other areas. For example, Itoh suggests making an advertisement with students. This was done in order to improve students' understanding of the media by experiencing the creators' side. Nagano points out that introducing IT into classrooms could be beneficial not only for students but also for teachers involved by promoting more interaction between teachers and helping them to learn about IT. These papers strongly suggest that we can do much more for education with IT than we do today.

#### *Building Websites*

For those who are interested in building their own websites, there are two papers. For an educational website, Kelly and Ishitani shows how "... 1) page design, 2) content design and 3) site design" (p.71) are three main areas which you should receive special attention. They have useful information clearly organized. Also in Hayashi's report on how he developed an Internet database of teaching materials, we can see how we can utilize the Internet for making connections between teachers.

#### *Problematic Aspects of IT in Classrooms*

As Yasunami and Okada, Yamamoto, and Yasunoh point out in their papers, one strength of using IT is that we can modify lessons to each individual's level and pace. However, there are problems with using IT in classrooms. Kumar points out some of the disadvantages of using the Internet in classrooms, stating that you have to know exactly where to look when you look for information, and we have to keep in mind the fact that some information is unreliable. These points are also mentioned by Kathleen Kitao, who offers suggestions on how exactly we can direct students in the right direction. Ruthven-Stuart argues that the "IT-Gulf" between teachers who use IT and the ones who do not is one of the main problems today, but individual teachers can gain experience from building and maintaining a website.

#### *Conclusion*

Overall, this is a very useful presentation of some of the developments that CALL has undergone in recent years. There is something for novice teachers who are wondering how they can "join the club", and also for experienced teachers who want to update their CALL courses. Because it is such a diverse collection of papers, it might have been helpful if the sections were divided into different categories according to the target population, for example a section for beginners with no or little experience with IT in classrooms, etc. However, since the publication is relatively small, it is still easy to

navigate. Currently, the complete index of papers is available at <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/organi/kyoto/book/>, however, by making the whole collection available online soon as well as at JALT conferences, it will be easy to access the ideas in the collection.

As can be seen in the diversity of papers collected in this publication, IT in language classrooms has been maturing and becoming more and more specialized. These are welcome developments in the field and this publication does an excellent job of detailing them.

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**The Changing Face of CALL: A Japanese Perspective**  
Paul Lewis (Ed.). (2002). The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Reviewed by Lawrie Hunter  
Kochi University of Technology

This collection of papers on CALL in Japan is not a proceedings type publication, even though it was conceived at, and written mostly by participants in, the 2001 JALTCALL SIG held at Kanto Gakuen University in Gunma in May of 2001.

In the introduction, editor Paul Lewis characterizes the book as shedding light on the question whether the computer in language education in Japan is merely one more new technology, or whether the computer is in fact imposing its own culture on language education.

Books about CALL are always in danger of being out of date before they go to press, given the ongoing rapid developments in computer technology, computer mediated communication and the Internet. The articles in this book, though, for the most part promise to be relevant and useful for some years to come.

The book is divided into three sections, though the editor himself admits that in such a young field as CALL, content divisions are likely to overlap considerably. The divisions are useful, though, in that they set up a framework for thinking about the curiously complicated body of thought and action in CALL. The following is a brief descriptive listing of the papers in the collection.

*Theories, models and paradigms*

Section One contains a wide variety of topics, but all the articles look at learning, technology, or what happens when technology invades the language learning scene.

Field develops a theory of learner development and a theory of curriculum development by analysing students' evaluations of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in their study program.

Hypertext is often derided as interesting but not really a practical pedagogical tool. Ryan's thankfully practical piece on continuing developments in hypertext technology and how he has used them in teaching is useful and suggestive of more hypertext in our near future (cf. the semantic web).

Berberich shows how artificial intelligence (AI) is quietly permeating our lives, and points to some AI-based instructional tools which are appearing, or are about to appear, on our learning/teaching horizon. Not science fiction.

Ariizume and Ariizume combine a piece of technology, computer assisted testing (CAT), with an educational assessment technique, Feuerstein's dynamic assessment (DA), to make their Technology Assistive Adaptive Dynamic Learning System (TAADLS), which they claim can enable the creation of a learner-sensitive computer assisted teaching system. The authors are developing TAADLS in their work as Japanese as a second language instructors in an American university.

Dryden and Marrone contribute a primarily policy-level paper which proposes that multiple intelligence (MI) theory is the key to resolving individual difference/learning style problems in curriculum design/delivery, and that ICT can provide the answers to all the how-to questions concerning the management of an MI-based curriculum design.

Adams and Shucart, claiming that most recent work done in CALL has been done without an explicit working model of language learning, propose a terraced labyrinth model (TLM) which views the learner's learning as the following of some linear path through a tree-like structure. They confess that their model is entirely theoretical at this point, but point to its value: it allows an instructional program to be completed as the program is running.

#### *CALL Resources*

Section Two contains five articles which all deal with the concrete "How to?" and "With what?" questions of CALL.

Szirmai's paper argues for a wider application of corpus linguistics in English language education in Japan. Corpus linguistics is known on a heard-of-it level amongst teachers, but actual adoption of the technology has not taken place for the most part. Szirmai's four-level model of the possible use of corpus linguistics shows how the technology might be used, though there is a caution that low level English learners cannot benefit particularly; rather, at this point in the history of the Japanese EFL scenario, this is a tool for teacher education.

Saunders describes the use of a database program to allow technical writing students to record general and technical vocabulary items (you know: lexical items are 'in', single words are 'out'). Developed for students in the United Arab Emirates, the program is to be ported to Japan. The learners are autonomous and empowered to make their own personal, flexible lexical collections using ICT.

Loucky ambitiously sets out to examine the effectiveness of bilingual (e.g. Japanese to English and vice versa) electronic dictionaries as support for Japanese as a second language (JSL) learners in looking up and recording new vocabulary. The author's tool for assessing learner knowledge is only mentioned in passing, and the results are only preliminary, but this study points to a fruitful area for a number of full studies.

Wanner presents a system for the linguistic analysis of child discourse using computerized transcripts. For years now, data for the CHILDES system has been recorded and analyzed manually; Wanner shows how this can be done more effectively with ICT and video recording. This is a good example of how relatively simple technology can enhance the power of a well-defined theoretical tool.

Duggan's survey of internal security as it affects teachers is a must-read for all who use computers, whether they are connected to the internet or not. Don't say you weren't warned!

#### *The CALL Classroom and Beyond*

"Beyond," the editor says, suggests an effort to "deconstruct those walls [of the classroom] in search of virtual and global learning environments."

Jarrell reveals that the walls of the classroom are still up for the most part in Japan, and examines the reason for the slowness of universities to adopt CALL and the Internet into their language pedagogy. He also provides a set of reasons why, and guidelines as to how, that adoption should take place.

Nozawa shows how his keypal (email penpal) program can provide learners with rich exposure to "real" language situations. Nozawa reviews the literature on this approach, and then presents a detailed piece of data-type research into student reactions to the keypal program, yielding significant results which are valuable reading.

Kitao posits that student web page projects are a powerful means of enhancing cultural awareness, and goes on to provide a thorough, practical, immediately useful guide for the creation of student web page projects. Instructors who have run web page projects will recognize the wisdom here; those who have no experience with such projects will avoid many pitfalls if they read this before they set out on their first voyage.

Kruse presents an emerging technology/future prospects survey of computerized testing in general, with the recently computerized TOEFL as an example worthy of the attention of every instructor wondering about her/his place in the increasingly wired world of ELT.

Thornton and Hauser put forth a meticulously researched study of one way of using students' cellular phones as the medium for "pushed" text input for orchestrated vocabulary acquisition. Their research is a good example of how careful task design and research follow-up are essential to the exploration of new technology when it is still "hot."

Kluge looks at cellular phones too, but in a global way, examining when and how the technology is appropriate for ELT, and modeling very nicely how we can think about new technology as it emerges. We are living in times of shockingly rapid change (What? Computer labs are out of date?), and the kind of thinking exemplified here will soon be required of all of us. Kluge refers to his paper as *kokoro no jumbi*, preparation of the heart, a most heartening theme in these times of shifting foundations.

Though not a textbook, this collection is largely a *kokoro no jumbi*, touching on many of the bases with which an ELT practitioner should be familiar at this interesting time in the history of education. The book is arguably uneven in terms of content and perspective – but that is as it should be: the field of CALL these days is uneven in just the same way.



### **WEB SITE REVIEWS**

#### **Criterion™ Online Writing Assessment and ScoreItNow®**

Reviewed by Tomonori Nagano  
New York University

As interest in communicative competence in ESL/EFL continues to grow, more attention has been paid to students' productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing). There has been a great deal of discussion in Japan and other countries where reading and grammar were predominant in instruction. However, Japanese teachers of English and administrators are still perplexed as to how to incorporate these communicative components in their instruction.

It is sometimes argued that the language assessment influences teaching and learning. Generally speaking, the multiple-choice test is associated with negative washback, encouraging teachers to teach for the tests and emphasizing the discrete language skills like grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, the performance test (e.g., essay composition and interview) is favored for its beneficial washback, that is, allowing teachers to engage in more communicative approaches in their classrooms.

Many teachers and administrators in Japan believe in the beneficial washback of the performance assessment. In contrast, the number of performance tests being practiced in Japan is amazingly low. For instance, *the National Center Test for University Entrance Examination*, one of the high-stakes tests in Japan, still consists of all multiple-choice tasks with little emphasis on speaking and writing. The reason for this paradox is simple. It is just not possible to assess all 442,263 test-takers with performance assessment. We are certainly short on time and resources to interview every single test-taker or to conduct norming sessions to train enough number of essay raters. The same is true in each school

district, school, and classroom. We are all aware of the value of performance assessment, but busy enough catching up with day-to-day business.

*Criterion Online Writing Assessment* and *ScoreItNow* could be a breakthrough in this dismal situation. Both of those online services are powered by *e-rater*, an automated essay assessment system, and offered by ETS technologies. The *e-rater*, a computer program that has been developed by ETS since 1988, can instantly score the essays, and its results show high consistency with trained professional human raters. According to the ETS, *e-rater* has attained more than 98% consistency with GMAT essay raters and 92% agreement in TOEFL essay scoring.

*Criterion Online Writing Assessment* was developed to provide a comprehensive writing learning system for educational institutes or companies. There are five different categories divided by grade level: Middle School (8<sup>th</sup> grade), High School (12<sup>th</sup> grade), College Level, Graduate Level (GMAT), and International Student (TOEFL). *Criterion* holistically evaluates the essay in terms of syntax, content, and organization of ideas, and reports a six-scale score. The scores are given on screen right after submission of essays and saved for future reference. Teachers can maintain a great amount of control over the system, for example, limiting essay topics for their students, accessing students' score records, checking progress of each student and so on. The demo version is available at the ETS Technology website at <<http://www.etstechnologies.com/criterion>>.

While *Criterion* is available only for large institutes, *ScoreItNow!* can be used by individual students, especially those who are studying for the TOEFL exam. Its assessment rubric is aligned with that of the TOEFL, and their topics are selected from the TOEFL exam. Thus, *ScoreItNow!* reports remarkable consistency with the scores given by the trained TOEFL essay raters (92%). Individual learners can purchase one unit (2 essays) of service for US\$10 through their website. The URL of the *ScoreItNow!* website is <<http://www.scoreitnow.org/>>.

#### *Trying out ScoreItNow!*

I tried out *ScoreItNow!* and have several comments for those who are considering using it.

First of all, all instructions and navigation on the website were written in simple English and quite intuitive. I thought even low-proficient English learners would be able to use it without difficulty. Although *ScoreItNow!* is highly aligned with the TOEFL exam, a few differences are mentioned in the instructions. Besides the essay being scored by *e-rater* instead of human raters, users can choose their own essay topic and can take the test without the time limit. One more difference I noticed was that *ScoreItNow!* evaluates the essays in six-scale score (1-6) whereas TOEFL test-takers might receive 11-scale scores including the decimal points such as 3.5 or 4.5.

The payment process was rather easy, and I instantly received my ID and password both on screen and by e-mail. The account was activated as soon as I received the e-mail message, so I was able to start my first essay within 15 minutes, including the payment process.

As mentioned above, the user of *ScoreItNow!* can choose their topics, unlike the TOEFL exam. The topics are categorized into about 10 different themes such as “change in the new century” or “something to change in school life.” It was possible to choose the topic either from the thematic categories or from the list of individual topics. The writing process was quite straightforward; there were several instructions (which looked similar to the writing tutorial in the TOEFL exam) and a small text box in which the user types the essay. Because the *ScoreItNow!* test is not timed, there is no clock on the screen (although the test is timed and the amount of time spent for an essay will be shown in the score report).

The only thing disappointed me was the score report (not only my score but its format!). According to the *ScoreItNow!* website, individualized advice for improving writing skill would be given in the score report. However, in my score report, there was only a link to a webpage. The advice on the webpage was not very satisfactory, because it was, presumably, written to apply to all users in the same score range. The checklist for essay review was available, but it was written too broadly to apply to individual review. I thought the advice section of *ScoreItNow!* needed improvement.

Across the board, *ScoreItNow!* was fairly good, and I was satisfied with it (especially considering the price I paid). According to the score report, the record will be stored and can be retrieved for six months, so, it is possible for users to have their own online writing database, with which they can check their progress in writing skills.

Both *ScoreItNow!* and *Criterion* will help teachers have the performance assessment in their classrooms. These online services are recommended not only to teachers who have GMAT or TOEFL courses but those who are seeking for a good step toward the communicative language teaching in their classroom.

