



A Minimalist Approach to Multi-level IT-human Integration in Translation Work'

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to define the intimate relationship that is intended between classroom-based and laboratory-based activities, between private study and language class, between individual and collective effort, and between computer-centered and teacher-led learning. We tend to take it as an axiom of CALL that the place of IT is beside the teacher, its function complementary or supplementary. Typically, the teacher's role is usually one (occasionally just a couple) of these: designer, author, editor, tester, provider, trainer, checker or supervisor. Except when in a supervisory role, the teacher's role is taken over by the computer when the teacher's own activity stops. This is what we tend to call computer-aided instruction. In the vast majority of cases, the role of IT is extrinsic to the teacher's own activity. I shall try to demonstrate here that the aid that the computer is able to provide can be effectively brought right into the classroom as an integral, intrinsic part of the teacher's own activity and that, by doing so, it can enhance not only the teacher's activity but also the complementary role which is traditionally assigned to the computer. The processes described here were developed with a specific situation in mind, not atypical in, at least, British Higher Education: increased mixed ability and reduced teaching time. In a pedagogical context that, in spite of in-session protestations, usually attempts to make the most of the average, they specifically target the lower and higher ability student ranges. New funding has been secured to continue with this research from September 2002.

KEYWORDS: Authoring tools, collaborative work, computer-aided instruction, ICT, Internet, mixed ability, self-access, teacher-computer integration, teacher-led learning, word-processing

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I. INTRODUCTION

The methodology described in this article has been developed for Spanish Translation seminars at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne (UNN), UK, over a period of years. It was prompted by practical issues concerning changes in four areas: curricular, technological, administrative and financial. The three latter changes kept demanding constant updating, when not discarding of materials, reworking and renegotiating access arrangements and, most importantly, curricular changes, affected final year students, especially those at either end of the proficiency spectrum. It was paramount to devise a system that would bypass as many difficulties at the time as possible as well as providing a consistent CALL environment for the foreseeable future².

The methodology integrates standard classroom practices with in-class CALL support and, at the same time, teacher-lead activities with independent and collaborative learning. It attempts to make use of standard generic software available in the widest public domain. Whilst from the technical point of view the methodology does not use state-of-the-art language technology, it exploits advanced features of standard applications, such as the Word Processor, which are normally forgotten by or even unknown to many teachers and general users. It also provides almost virtual independence from technical assistance, thus providing the language teacher with almost total control of the whole learning environment. And because it uses applications available on the central University network, it does not imply any disbursement of departmental monies.

Several developmental stages were piloted between 1995 and 2001, but a systematic study of student use and performance was never carried out. This, for a variety of reasons, the immediate one being the continuous changes in technical specifications and administrative procedures for hardware and software purchase, access and support, which prevented the continuity of variables required to allow proper observation. There are other pedagogic, practical and even ethical reasons why I do not intend at present to measure the level of this hypothetical improvement: setting up a control group would imply excluding one of the three groups taught from a methodology which provides 'academic coherence' AND 'group identity' to all three groups. It would also deprive individual students from the control group the (hypothetical) extra chances of success derived from exposure, not just to the methodology, but to the added richness of the language experience offered within the overall integrated environment.

There was a later suggestion that a control group would emerge spontaneously by the expedience of some students not using the methodology outside the classroom, but it seemed flawed, because, typically, those students would be the least motivated and the sample would be biased as a result. Indeed, better students or those with higher aspirations and, to a lesser extent,

weaker students with a fear (not necessarily well founded) of failing, were the ones who expressed greater willingness to try out the methodology.

11. EXTEKNAL LEARNING CONSTRAINTS

First, it must be stressed that the IT provision available to Languages departments is not necessarily planned with Modern Languages in mind. Moreover, FL departments, at least in the UK, will usually find themselves carrying out a considerable amount of service teaching to other faculties and even at other campuses, each with its own IT specifications and access rules. In a financial environment where departments are cost centres, this translates often in students from serviced courses being denied access to departmental facilities. There is, however, one common denominator in IT provision, usually available on the institutional central network, the word processor. Hence, its use as the technical centrepiece of the methodology.

If we see these constraints against the backdrop of language syllabi which do not normally incorporate (or even promote) the use of IT, it will be understood that there must be an element of improvisation, of ingenuity and, in the actual logistics involved, even of 'picaresque'. The methodology cannot then be fully planned. It was initially more a question of making do, of teaching 'on the hoof'. If, as Belford (1991:161) says, there is no methodology without philosophy, but only method, the main claim to the appropriateness in using the word *methodology* lies on the philosophy of need. From the student point of view, there is a need to surmount language learning problems brought about by curricular changes, and also the real-life need to experience the new technologies. From the point of view of the lecturer, there was an immediate need to find a way to handle a group of students with a marked increase in their ability range and performance levels. Financial constraints and a general lack of IT support infrastructure meant adopting a minimalist approach to software, by making imaginative use of generic applications and recycling dedicated low-cost ones.

The new prominent role given to IT both in the classroom at Spanish translation classes in the UNN and outside it, although a natural progression from previous uses, responds primarily to a need to compensate for the reduced number of teaching weeks which seniorization has brought and for the, in some cases, absence of a formal Spanish placement in year 3. On this last point, Coleman's thorough survey of language students does not surprise us when we read of the "dramatic impact" which residence abroad has on them (Coleman 1996: 112). But even if "grammar gains are harder to find" than "oral-aural fluency, vocabulary and sociolinguistic competence" (op.cit. 58) — we have all visited the bars where this latter competence is acquired, they were always present. It was these grammar gains that the methodology tries to achieve.

III. THREE LEVELS OF HYPERACTIVITY IN INTEGRATION

To explain the multi-level approach to integration offered by this methodology we can look at the various meanings of the prefix 'hyper'. It was first used in 'hypertext' to designate inter and intra-textual connections integrating several documents into a single resource. Then it was transposed to hypermedia to indicate links between different media, not just between texts. In our context 'hyper' refers to the integration and cross-referencing intended between activities: classroom and laboratory, private study and language class, individual and collaborative effort, computer-centered and teacher-led. Figure 1 offers a schematic view of how this third level of integration between machine and teacher has developed in our methodology.

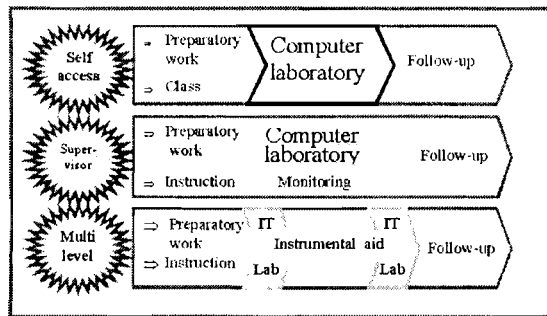


Figure 1: Three integration levels

At the level of class dynamics, integration also means bringing back into the fold those students at the two ends of the ability spectrum who may find themselves disenfranchised. At one end, there are one-time beginners returning from a long placement in a non-Spanish speaking country, who may even need some basic remedial grammatical work; at the other end, students with "A" level entry and a full year in Spain, some of whom may aspire to a First Class degree classification. In addition, each cohort usually includes up to 20% of Erasmus students — some native speakers of Spanish — normally, with above average standards. This is witness to the fact that mixed ability teaching is creeping into the more advanced stages of undergraduate work.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A Spanish placement is no longer a certainty. Some students will spend a period in Spain only if they arrange it themselves during vacation time, but there is no academic provision comparable with the formal one. Some of these students were complete beginners on enrolment and after two years of intensive study, the period of Spanish residence was not enough to bring their average

examination results on a par with students who had studied Spanish at school. Whilst fewer reached Upper Second, a small number found themselves worrying too much about the possibility of results. Equally, post A level students with no Spanish placement were also suffering.

A complex course structure prevents splitting year groups into streams. Therefore, there was an obvious need to consider the development of a new methodology which would cater for mixed ability whilst preserving minimum standards at the same time as supporting excellence. These are the guiding principles:

- Prevent a feeling of alienation among the weaker students.
- Make students aware of their own abilities.
- Boost their confidence.
- Increase their expectations.
- Promote co-operation and mutual help.
- Encourage active class participation.
- Facilitate access and feedback.
- Enable excellence.
- Maintain standards.
- Increase exposure to language: vocabulary, and grammatical structures.
- Sustain interest.

V. OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

There is one main cycle or ring circuit, of an instructional / training nature. There are also in-built testing spurs to accommodate individually monitored work. IT is involved in the two processes, both at the beginning and at the end, and each translation is reviewed in class, also with the help of IT. Uncharacteristically in the use of CALL, the focal point of the methodology is a teacher-led class, rather than individual student work, supervised or not. But IT is also at the centre of the methodology, both in function and in time, for it provides a forum for discussing individual and collaborative work and it originates material for follow-up and revision work. This prominence contrasts with an earlier vision of methodologies which, typically motivated by the technological

push, placed translation-aid applications in the focal position of IT-based teaching. *Figure 2* offers a flow chart of this instructional cycle:

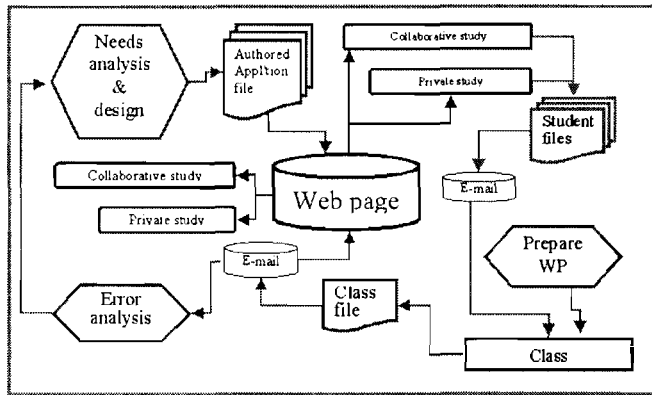


Figure 2: The instructional cycle

Translation files based on a previous needs analysis are prepared using any suitable application. This needs analysis stems partly from a joint study with Pascual Cantos, University of Murcia, on Spanish compositions by UNN students. The original idea was to create a non-native corpus of Spanish. The contents of the file are described later. The file is placed on the lecturer's web page and students access it either individually or in teams. The latter is encouraged. Students prepare translations prior to the class and e-mail their files to the lecturer prior to the class. During the class, student files are loaded to the word processor (Microsoft Word) and viewed with a LCD projector. Since the WP allows several files to be displayed at the same time, the same sentence from each student translation file (up to a maximum of four) can be viewed simultaneously. This is set up prior to the start of the class. The class itself can progress in a number of different ways, for the sake of variety and to foster alertness among students. The WP work is done by the lecturer.

- A new blank file is created and it grows as each student (or a small team of students) agrees on the best rendition, mostly — but not necessarily — taken from the student files on view.
- A new blank file is created from memory, after visual access to student files is denied following the reading of the sentence in hand.
- There is no new file created but student files themselves are edited.

Editing is done in a way which is explained later. After the class, files follow two paths:

- They are studied by the lecturer for error and needs analysis
- They are placed on the web for private or joint use by students

There is a second cycle which operates when students are given set-work for the purpose of individual monitoring. This takes place twice a semester, four times a year. It follows the same basic steps, except that students are returned their individually annotated — not corrected — files via e-mail. A 'Common Errors File' is prepared by the lecturer and placed on the web. Students correct their translation with reference to this file. The cycle is longer but there are usually between two and three weeks between the deadline to submit the translations and the correction class.

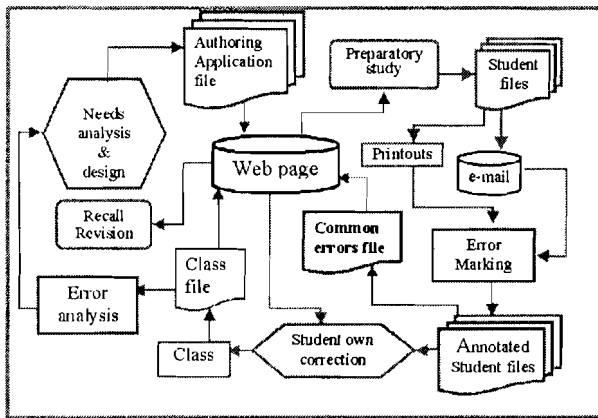


Figure 3: The testing / monitoring cycle

It is important to note that student files are annotated and marks awarded — but not disclosed. Disclosure takes place only after and only if corrections have been made. Students may collaborate when they prepare their translations as long as they present individual files.

The class revolves in this case around the students own corrected files. As with the instructional cycle, resulting files are placed back on the web for student revision. Files are also available for the lecturer's own error and needs analysis.

VI. THE AUTHORED SOURCE FILE

Originally meant to be the bricks and mortar of both ring circuit and spurs, *Poetry Shell* (OUP, 1992), an authoring package devised primarily to teach poetry, provided good functionality to create a series of self-contained packs, each with hypertext and hypermedia material based on an English text for translation into Spanish.

Poetry Shell was abandoned in 1998 because the university stopped offering official support for Assimetrics Toolbook, the application which runs *Poetry Shell*. The shell allowed the creation of packs very similar in their conception to those provided later by TELL's *TransIt Tiger Authoring Shell*. Both offered an original source text, a model translation, a glossary and hints or notes, all in a hypertext environment. It lacked some of the advantages of power and user-friendliness (for both author and user) brought by later developments in IT, but it had the advantage of providing hyperlinks from the glossary to a granular, the possibility of two or more contrasting translations, additional supporting texts (e.g. on background) and some multimedia (visual) support. Developed originally with Anglo-Saxon poetry in mind (hence the title), the shell was flexible enough to be adapted to the principles earlier in this article.

The *Poetry Shell* environment was later recreated using *AOL-press*, a web-authoring application provided by the Internet provider AOL. *AOL-press* is still functional but AOL does not support it any more. Today, the same type of environment is easily achieved using a standard word processor with the ability to convert .doc files to .html or any simple web-page design package. Either way, each translation pack is made available on the Internet within seconds of creation. The files with which translation packs are built are always WP (.doc) files and can, therefore be instantly converted and imported into any web-authoring package used, independently of the presentational format used.

Figures 4 to 9 offer screen-dumps and snapshots of various source files created with a variety of applications or shells.

Glossary	Find	Analogue	Images	Grammar	New Notepad	Help
Notes	Usage	Translations	Topics	Bibliography	Open Notepad	Exit
					Save Notepad	

The 4th Age: BA4 Exam 95-96	
<p>22 The problems surrounding what some gerontologists call the "fourth age" - from about 75 onwards - seem intractable.</p> <p>26 Unless a society is prepared to encourage its old folks to wander off into the snow, Eskimo-style - or some inodern equivalent-, it will just have to pay up.</p> <p>31 But the main expense for most countries will be in providing for the huge numbers who in the next few decades will reach the "third age" -</p>	<p>surrounding verb</p> <p>Parse: adj. funcioni</p> <p>Grammar: \$3</p> <p>Rootform: surround</p> <p>Meaning: rodear</p> <hr/> <p>Usage:</p>

Grammar notes	←
<p>\$3 NON-VERBAL FUNCTIONS of -ING words:</p> <p>-ING words may occupy slots normally occupied by an adjective or a noun in these cases. the -ing word does not function as a verb (gerund) but as either an adjective or a noun and it should not be translated by the gerund</p> <p>(a) ADJECTIVAL functinn: The -ing vword is qualifying a noun. 'DRINKING / DIRTY water', 'REAL / BUYING power'. Translate as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * An ADJECTIVE: 'agua potable'. * A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: 'poder de compra' * A RELATIVE CLAUSE: 'agua que se puede beber' 	<div style="text-align: center;">Notepad</div> <p>Los problemas que rodean lo que algunos</p>

Figure 4: Poetry Shell pack: English text and Grammar notes

Old Age: translation notes	Notepad
<p>[22] SURROUNDING:</p> <p>This -ing vword is acting here as an adjective. Check the grammar 'Rodear' and 'enfrentarse a' are possible solutions, but care must be taken when deciding which one to use. because the subject of one is the object of the other: 'problems (= subject) RODEAR the 4th age' but 'the 4th age (= subject) ENFRENTARSE A problems'. This is important when you come to using relative pronouns: the problems WHICH the 4th age confront' and 'WHAT they call the 4th age', because they MAY need a preposition depending on which verb you use.</p> <p>CALL Of cours. 'llamar'</p>	<p>Los problemas que rodean lo que algunos llaman la cuarta ec</p> <p>Los problemas a que se enfrenia lo que algunos ...</p>

Figure 5: Poetry Shell pack: Translation notes and note pad

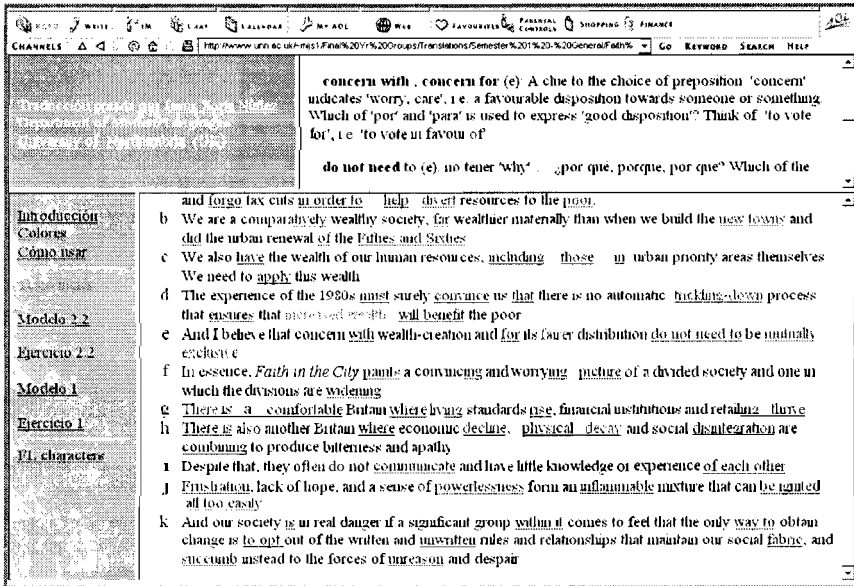


Figure 6: AOL-press ptrck: English text with hyperlink to translation notes

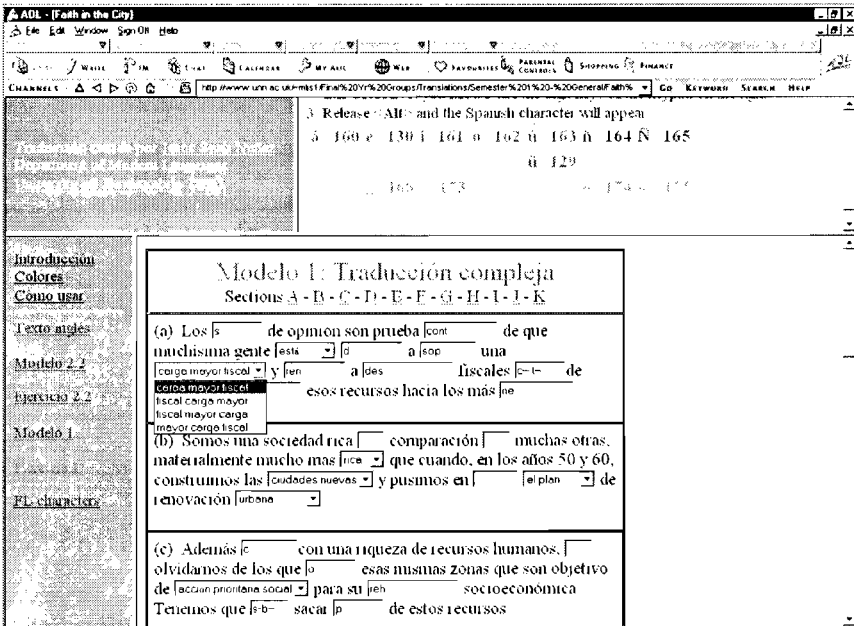


Figure 7: AOL-press pack: Gap translation exercise (advanced model) and Spanish characters help file

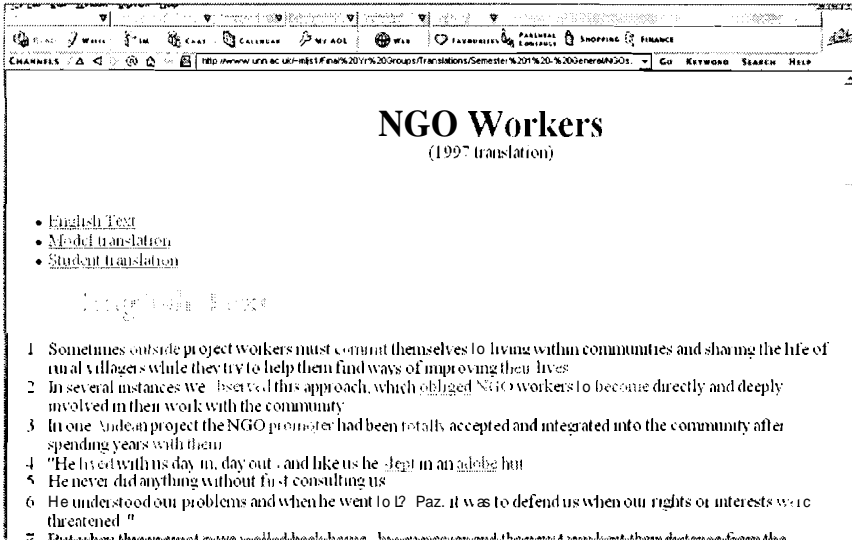


Figure 8: MS Word pack: English text showing links to other areas of the file

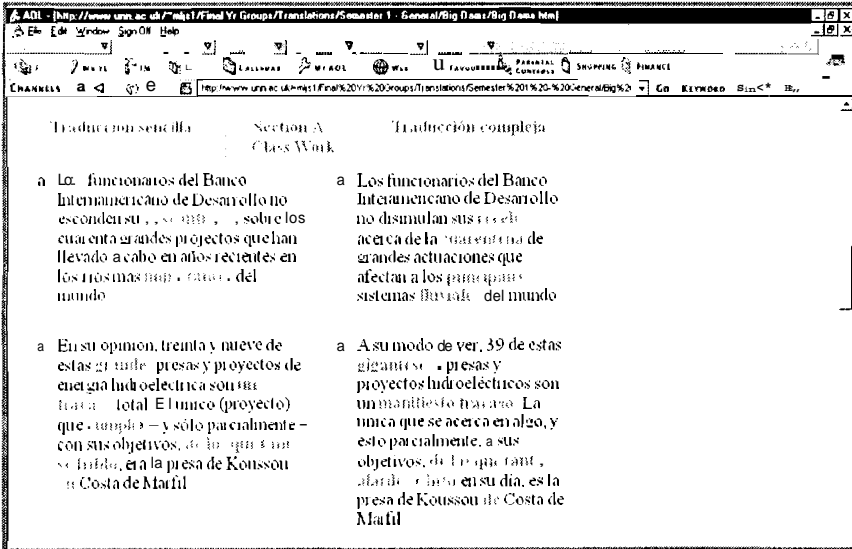


Figure 9: MS pack showing two model translations side by side

Presentational formats are dictated partly by the application used to generate the source file and partly by the need to produce packs in the shortest possible time. But they all share the same pedagogical principles and roughly the same types of files.

The components of the source translation pack are the following:

- English text with hyperlinks to glossary, translation, grammar, cultural and historical notes. The glossary is selective.
- Glossary, grammar and translation, cultural and historical notes.
- Two separated model Spanish translations ('survival' and 'ambitious') hyperlinks to explanations, alternatives or tactical approach.
- One gapped translation practice file for each model Spanish translation.
- Other ancillary files or sections such as instructions or FL character help.

VI.1. Shell Authoring Packages

Users of packages such as Poetry Shell or any of the recreations mentioned above approach shell authoring differently, especially in what concerns the degree of targeting included in the glossary and other help files. Holmes (1997), for instance, considers that students should make the effort to jump from a general meaning to a more specific one fitting the context, so that they "learn not to trust the definitions" provided. My own view differs from this, but I do not propose to discuss it here beyond saying that the packs described in this article provide both the information required to learn and the opportunity to do the translation without reference to the notes. How much help is included, whether specific, generic or in clue form is a matter of judgment which can only be exercised by the teacher. Of course, the teacher must be the author of such a package for it makes little sense to create it without prior knowledge of the specific needs and aspirations of students, their deficiencies and abilities. This is why the teacher occupies centre stage in this methodology while technology is only instrumental in its delivery.

Other observers also comment on positive aspects of such packages as well as being aware of basically the same problems. Thus, Beedham (1995: 2.3) reports on students (especially the more advanced ones) approaching *The Dream of the Rood (Poetry Shell)* with fun-derived enthusiasm whilst Holmes (1997) refers to *Transit Tigers*'s potential for Swedish with mixed ability groups and Small (1997: 5), to its suitability for post-beginners use. Among my own students, the better ones (whichever in attitude or performance) were also in a majority among those willing to use the package.

On the other hand, the same authors highlight the dangers which the unusual amount of help offered by these 'rich environments' can bring, among them laziness (Beedham, *ibid.*) and

"IT-fatigue" (Holmes, *ibid.*). The former problem, a misconception in my opinion, is echoed by some of my own students, who expressed guilt-like feelings at such an array of helpful material (*'it's a bit like cheating'*), whilst Goodfellow (1997) gives us a cautionary tale on the latter point: "the more automatic students become (...) the less likely they are to make use of CALL, [and] the development of familiarity and skills using general-purpose IT applications [such as word-processing] (...) produces resistance to activities which do not exercise those skills."

My own view concerning 'rich environments' is not that they provide 'too much help' but 'all the elements they need to succeed'. For those who feel somewhat uneasy about a sufficient lack of effort let's use athletes preparing themselves for the Olympics as a metaphor. There is a lot of sustained hard work put into routine training, but athletes do not test their real potential during training, only at a few number of meetings. The measure of their confidence before the ultimate test is the overall feeling of the good condition and sustained improvement achieved during training.

Moreover, it is not as if students have it easy with the type of path described here. There are two basic strategies inbuilt in the translation process offered to students, both within the framework of grammatical accuracy. Each one of them informs one of the 'model' translations offered. 'Model' here is not intended to mean 'modelic' but 'imitable'. These 'model' translations are not created to be masterpieces of translation work but to offer specific solutions to specific problems. They are not dogmatic but illustrate, alongside other help files, strategies to be followed. Students are encouraged to study and imitate solutions offered in either or both of them. The strategies are:

- Error-avoidance
- Experimentation and creativity

The error avoidance strategy lies behind the 'survival' model. This model attempts to create solutions based on students existing ability by tapping their passive knowledge of the language and, whenever possible, their ability to 'reason' solutions. On a psychological level, it attempts to give confidence in their ability to those students who may lack in it.

The 'experimentation and creativity' strategy is the mainstay of the 'ambitious' model. This model is based on the simple principle that if a student knows how to translate something is not going to learn anything by doing it in the way he or she knows. It offers, therefore, alternative solutions, even if they are not going to be the preferred ones by the lecturer. It aims at giving students extra exposure to language which they may not encounter otherwise other than in a passive context

Beedham's experience (1995: 3) is that students' relative performance against each other

was not affected: students performed according to the lecturer's expectations — not a bad thing if each student's performance and, hence, the group's as a whole, is improved.

VII. IN-CLASS EDITING WITH MS WORD

The idea of using generic applications as general teaching aids is not new. This is not surprising because, having a wider market, they tend to incorporate more sophisticated features than dedicated teaching ones. It is perfectly possible, for instance, to use databases for language work (not just for data handling or retrieving). This has been done earlier — in my case with the old dBase range. Powerpoint is used extensively in certain UNN Spanish courses and even spreadsheets lend themselves to language teaching purposes to the extent to which they can handle characters. All this has been especially possible since the development of suits of applications, such as Microsoft Office.

However, students require special training in their use, which is often unavailable to mainstream language degree students, and unaffordable, in time if anything else, to languages departments. Students and colleagues react with scepticism and even open antagonism to the idea of using applications which are 'alien' to language studies. However, students from 'serviced courses', typically from business-related degrees who already come with a knowledge of these non-language-based applications, are able to approach them with a more open mind.

As for word-processing, its use has also been limited in language teaching in spite of the obvious appeal that it should have had. The fact that language teachers have used it mainly for inputting text (and this includes creative writing) has prevented us from exploring its actual potential for processing the written word much beyond cutting and pasting or increasing the text's presentational appeal. Whilst Groundwater-Smith (1993: 11) highlights how editing can go beyond "merely attending to surface structures (...) and lead to accumulated re-conceptualising of the written piece", Felix & Lawson (1996: 13) report on the increasing use and positive outcomes of word-processing for language teaching mostly in EFL projects. However, we are still dealing mainly, if not exclusively, with the writing process, as D. Wolff (1993: 23) demonstrates when he speaks of his conviction "that the word processor is a valuable tool and help facility in language learning", for if refers to procedural matters.

This is a very worthy use but one that, in exclusivity, does not do full justice to an application dedicated to the processing of text, as I shall try to demonstrate shortly.

This underuse of the word-processor may be due to two factors:

- The presence of 'competing' dedicated applications, perceived as the natural SLA tools provided by IT, i.e. CALL — which brings back to mind Goodfellow's earlier reference to

the inverse relationship between CALL and standard applications as far as student appeal is concerned.

- Our failure to react to T. Wolfe's general assertion, as early as 1968 (see Curtis 1993: 98), that "the new technologies (...) have become a new environment (...) that radically alters the entire way people use their five senses". Monteith (1993: 1) has applied this to language: "microcomputers bring with them the possibility of pedagogical reform as commonplace practices change to accommodate them."

Word processing is very useful to put into practice Felix and Lawson's (1997: 13) advice that "teaching approaches which focus on linguistic features and structure simultaneously rather than separately will lead to more satisfactory writing" — or, as I would argue, translating.

Word processors are applications incorporating a vast array of extremely sophisticated functions. Some are explicitly word-processing ones but there are many more which, usually discarded aprioristically as purely cosmetic or extraneous to language, offer nevertheless the transparency which D. Wolff (1993: 27) claims is necessary during the learning process for students to acquire declarative and procedural knowledge. It can be argued that this transparency helps in the context in which "the development of proficiency in a second language depends on the automatization of processes that are first mastered by conscious effort." (Little 1997). *Figure 10* shows a selection of editing possibilities as carried out on an actual student file in a typical translation class.

VII.1. Presentation of English Text

First, the English text is presented with a variety of highlights which alert students to a number of points, in order to avoid errors or to practise alternative structures. The purpose is, as stated earlier, to focus their attention onto specific language issues, initiate a rational process and facilitate success with a maximum avoidance of errors. Colours are based on traffic lights as a standard metaphor for behaviour. Of course, the decision to allocate colours is made by the teacher, who bases it on his intimate knowledge of students derived from previous error analysis. Students themselves have become acquainted with the difficulties or suggestions to which they are alerted in two ways: using the translation pack before the class takes place and through normal class interaction during the semester.

- YELLOW indicates general alertness and points at concomitant changes, typically gender / number agreement and verb tense sequencing, among others. In our example, it also alerts students to the common issue of translating making English 'people' agree with singular or

plural words ('people say' versus 'la gente dice'). The colour also helps maintain the attention on the issue for as long as there are references to 'people'.

- **INTERSECTING OVALS** over concomitant changes suggest that the doubly-enclosed phrase could function in two or more ways. In our example, should 'its old folk' be treated as the object of 'encourage' or as the 'subject' of 'to wander'?
- **GREEN** indicates freedom of movement and points at the possibility of putting into practice certain strategies or trying out alternative structures. It alerts students, for instance, to the different possible renditions of adjectival phrases (En. 'between the generations' versus Sp. 'intergeneracional'), or to verbs of becoming (En. 'get older' v. Sp. 'se hacen viejos' or 'envejecen'). An alternative for En. preposition 'about' could be the Sp. adjective 'unos'
- **RED-MAGENTA** is used to warn of danger: stop before you rush into translating. It alerts students to their most common grammatical and lexical errors. Thus students should think twice before translating En. 'argument' as Sp. 'argumento'; the structure 'AS COMPARATIVE ... COMPARATIVE' deserves special attention: Sp. 'como' may not be the correct translation for En. 'as'.
- Finally, **BLUE-CYAN**, lying outside the traffic lights metaphor, tells students that they are not expected to know words highlighted in that colour, suggesting them to consult a dictionary or even a native speaker — there is no point in getting it wrong just out of sheer ignorance. Thus, while 'Eskinio' and 'intractable' would normally require dictionary help, 'burgon' requires help beyond the dictionary, for the dictionary suggestion of 'prosper' clashes semantically with the 'unwelcome increased expenditure' derived from the context; similarly with 'nursing care' the dictionary could lead to tautologies like 'cuidado cuidadoso' or unlikely dead-ends like 'atención con cuidado'.

VII.2. Editing of Student File

Actual translation work is done in class in one of two ways, as the instructional cycle mentioned above explains, by editing either a brand new file created in class or student files submitted via e-mail and preloaded to the WP. In both cases the editing process takes place as students offer their translations or comments. The idea is to record on the resulting .doc file as much as possible of what is transacted in the class. This real-time editing requires from the teacher a high level of proficiency in the use of the WP.

VII.3. Teacher Expertise in IT

The WP provides several predefined ways of correcting and annotating text.

**Extract of student translation corrected in class
and re-installed in the network.**

Key to highlights on English text: Concomitant changes

The pensions. Medical expenses, too, will
 es people . Nor is care for the aged about medical provision. people
 reach a age, some of them will need intensive towards the end of their lives.
 The problems what some gerontolog call the "fourth age" - from 75 onwards
 - s e e m . Unless a society prepared to encourage its old folks to wander the
 snow, -style -or some modern equivalent-, it pay .

El ~~argumento~~-conflicto entre las generaciones no es ~~so~~-sób sobre las pensiones. [↑] Los Gastos
 medicales- médicos también ~~pro~~perarán- aumentarán ~~como~~-a medida que [↑] la gente envejece.
 Tampoco es ~~????~~ el cuidado ~~para~~- de los ancianos ~~sobre~~-las ~~pro~~vision medical prestaciones médicas.
~~Como~~ ~~????~~ más la gente va alcanzando una edad cada vez mayor, algunos [de ellos] necesitarán
 cuidados intensivos hacia el final de sus vidas. Los problemas que ~~we~~dean b que ~~dicen~~- algunos
 gerontólogos llaman "la cuarta edad" -bs de más de ~~uros~~ 75 años - [↑] parecen inextricables. A menos que
 una sociedad esté dispuesta a alentar a sus ~~vejes~~- ancianos / mayores a irse ~~en~~- por la nieve, al estilo
 esquimal (o un equivalente moderno), tendrá que [↑] pagar. Pero en la mayoría de los países, el gasto
 principal será mantener el gran número de personas que [↑] en las próximas décadas llegará a la "tercera
 edad" en las próximas décadas- es decir [las que se encuentran] entre la jubilación y la ~~de~~rencia invalidez.

- generacional
- trata&: se aduce a, se centra en / sobre; se circunscribe a, es cuestión de;
- se incrementarán;
- * NB. Simultaneous progression.
- va envejeciendo; se va haciendo mayor??????
- por servicios médicos: la asistencia sanitaria,
- más avanzada
- * a partir de los 75 años; de bs 75 años en adelante.
- * insolubles
- or: "encourage that its old folks wonder ..." Any preference?

Figure 10: In-class edited student file

The 'track changes' function provides a very efficient way of making fast and clear changes to the original text and is a favourite in this methodology. The function can be tailored so that characters acquire new text features to signify various things. Thus, replaced text, i.e. wrong translation, rather than being deleted, can be turned pale grey, crossed-out and given a pitch slightly smaller than the original. This would not interfere with the readability of the whole text.

Replacing text, i.e. corrections, is set to bold dark magenta, not too different from the original font, thus making it stand out while affording readability.

Once these settings are in place and for as long no one else tampers with them, the editing happens automatically as you type. The sample provided in figure

Alternative renditions can be graded by using smaller font sizes. Explanations may be added as footnotes and connections between words by means of hyperlinks and bookmarks. For this to work efficiently in the classroom, 'shortcuts' (usually pre-defined key combinations with <Ctrl>, <Alt> or both) must be second nature to the teacher, since they allow instant editing. There are many shortcuts that allow the teacher to move instantaneously from any part of the text to another or to highlight in many ways any amount of text, decrease or increase font size, lengthen, shorten or switch the highlight, etc.

In addition, macros provide immense extra functionality. A macro is a mini-program that performs a very specific task. It can be created without knowing any programming languages by just going once through the steps required for that task to be performed. The functionality of macros comes to its own in the classroom when they are assigned a key combination which has not been preallocated as a 'shortcut' for any predefined function. The combination <Ctrl S> for instance is the shortcut for 'Save', i.e. it saves you from going through the menus, and is predefined. But the combination <Alt R>, for instance, may be assigned to turn words to font size X in red. It would take under a second to do it.

The 'Autocorrection' function can equally be tailored to introduce automatically special characters such as arrows, without having to go through all the menus. For instance the arrow a has been created here by typing - - > without gaps.

As well as editing text, the teacher can, if circumstances suggest it, add a number of symbols so that the class may focus their attention onto something which was dealt with before or needs to be taken into account before attempting a translation. Blue arrows indicate suggested word order changes and can be inserted by way of a macro.

The ability to hide text (without deleting it) and make it re-emerge is especially useful to isolate the components of a main clause from embedded and other clauses, for instance, and, vice versa,

to identify those embedded clauses, or any other components of whatever length, however truncated and wherever located within the sentence.

VIII. FINDINGS

The experience of this methodology is not uniform across the years, but varies according to many variables outside the teacher's control, e.g. missing cable, projector not being delivered to the classroom in time, students not adhering to standards on submission of files. But on the whole, as long as the teacher has control over the PC, laptop (preferably) or desktop, classroom practice is as consistent as in any other situation that does not rely on IT. The most consistent findings are these:

- Improved attention and concentration. Students' responses include reasons like:
 - The overall novelty of the methodology; because they did not have any previous experience of this, they did not have expectations and, therefore, they did not know exactly what was likely to happen next.
 - A feeling of receiving special treatment: they are doing something which is more exciting than in other classes.
 - The brightness of the screen and the colours
 - The movements of cursor and highlights catches their eye and their attention.
 - They do not have to do it; the teacher does it!
- Makes grammatical points much more transparent and clear (see D. Wolff, earlier).
- The almost total absence of clutter typical of standard OHPs (Felix & Lawson: 1993: 13), let alone white or black boards, provides an improved general sense of order and organisation. This works promotes the students' impression that the teacher knows what he or she is doing and, in turn, boosts their confidence in the overall process.
- It feels more like editing than correcting: *"you don't feel so awful even if your translation is heavily edited"*. It is important to add here that, although the overall strategy was intended to lessen student's overall anxiety, this was an unexpected benefit in as much as it referred to a correcting process, which tends to increase tension (Bartram & Walton 1991: 36-27 and Coleman 1996: 131). This reduction in anxiety may be attributed to one or more of the following factors:
 - Verbal activity is distributed almost equally among correcting errors, finding alternatives (e.g. synonyms or structural transformations based on alternative parts of speech) and expanding on lexical, syntactical or pragmatic points.

- Although clear distinction is made between genuine errors and second-best alternatives, on-screen activity does not enhance any of them over the others.
- In spite of the permanence of the edited-out original words in the final text, the colour scheme and the editing functions make this final version read quite easily as continuous prose, and both errors and discarded alternatives fade equally into the background. (The sample offered in Figure 10 does not illustrate well this point).
- Finally, students may concentrate more on screen activity, i.e. language work, than on the intervening persons, i.e. the teacher or the student whose extract is being corrected).

Up to here, students' comments with which I am compelled to agree. It is possible to add, however, the following ones:

- My own impression that, at least class performance, is better than before, in spite of the absence of thorough quantitative data.
- The permanence which the final files provide has interesting outcomes and it has also prompted considerations which were not contemplated at the outset:
- This permanence works both in time and place, for nothing has to be rubbed off and, therefore, everything is available at a key-stroke, even if it is not visible at that time.
- Additionally, at the end of the semester or academic year there is a full record, accessible to everyone, not only of each individual class, but also of the whole semester, year, etc.
- This provides the teacher with an invaluable resource for re-examining student needs and for assessing and controlling the linguistic exposure which the collection of texts provides at any given time. An obvious development was to use concordancers such as OCP (OUP) or TACT (University of Toronto) to carry out a more detailed analysis. Both were used for a variety of specific purposes.
- As for students, they are likely to feel more valued as their own comments or alternatives are included in the file. Weaker students may glow with self-esteem when they have been given the opportunity to make a relevant comment, even if it was not particularly inspiring, and it has ended up in the final file.

Finally, and most importantly, there seems to be a perfect marriage of human and machine roles.

- This enhances the value of IT in students' eyes, for it does not work against their "majority feeling that the teacher or the class is essential for improvement" and that the classroom "is the key framework for their language learning" (Broady 1997).
- It helps to dispel the cult-like mystique which dominates the way some people approach IT. Curtis (1993: 99-100) explains Ihde's argument that the definition of boundaries between

Human and machine roles runs along a continuum with transparency and opacity at its ends: "the more the machine functions in the role of bodily extension [a pen, a garden fork], the more it is transparent". and he places the computer at the opacity end: "it is perceived as separate, with its own identity". The teacher's use of the computer visibly as an instrument to highlight or complement verbal activity enhances the role of the teacher instead of diminishing it.

There may be, however, a few shortcomings whose real importance is difficult to assess:

- Loss of eye-contact was initially the most disappointing one by far. However, as familiarity with editing procedures improved, it stopped being a problem, in much the same way as it is perfectly possible for competent readers to lift their eyes from the page without stopping the flow, or for good typists to type without looking at the keyboard.
- The amount of text covered in class was also reduced at the start. Again, this improved considerably with time levels of coverage were soon reached equal to those in previous years. This was not a real worry anyway, for texts are chosen for the specific problems they illustrate (the result of previous error-analysis) and these problems are reviewed in more than one text. And, in any case, one of the functions of the source files is precisely to provide this cover in the form of self study after the class.
- The fact that the methodology was being developed practically in front of the students' very eyes, added on occasions a degree of inconsistency and even incompetence, which made me more uneasy than the students.
- And finally, the expected and ubiquitous problem which we encounter with IT in general and which are due, almost always, to our own deficiencies in IT skills, both in hardware and software terms. However, this should not just detract us from experimenting with IT; quite the opposite, it should imprint in our minds the need to come to terms with technology and either train ourselves or demand training support to develop these skills.

IX. INDIVIDUAL MONITORING: ANNOTATING, MARKING AND CORRECTING

Language learning is a highly individualised process (Wolff 1993: 12) and, as such, it requires individualised monitoring, if only because students tend to perceive correction and individual feedback as a yard stick for measuring the teacher's commitment. Also, falling short of their expectations leads to social anxiety (Bartram & Walton 1991: 27). Additionally, in spite of all the gains derived from collaborative work, "collective meaning-making is inconsistent with the processes of assessment and credentialing", (Groundwater-Smyth 1993: 12) which are, essentially, individual.

As explained earlier, handed-in work is annotated but not corrected. A comprehensive mark-up code is used to direct students' attention to the nature of their mistakes so that they are able to correct them by themselves. This is a time-consuming process also favoured by others (e.g. Bartram & Walton 1991: 84) but, as Felix & Lawson (1996: 13) say, it runs the risk of being ineffective because many students are more interested in the mark awarded than in the benefits which may be derived from written comments, no matter how individual or well targeted they are. Awareness of this is precisely the reason why annotated translations are returned without a mark. Marks are withdrawn and only disclosed to those students who bring their corrected work to the appropriate seminar. Moreover, the withheld mark is not final; instead, any student who hands in the amended version is given an upgraded mark. This new version must incorporate corrections in bold in order to facilitate the teacher's task.

Although these exercises are not formally assessed, students overall find the process encouraging because

- The increased mark is perceived as a record of their improved performance and effort in the teacher's own mind and appreciation, and
- They see the benefits of actually going over their own mistakes.

This second aspect, however, is not as obvious to them as it may be to the teacher. The culture of task-based learning has a lot to answer for in this respect, for many students act as if the learning process is circumscribed to the production of objects with a physical entity (be they ink-stained papers or sound waves) within a statutory amount of time (a 50 minute class or a two hour translation at Ionic). In this respect, it is surprising that a significant proportion of students are prepared to forgo even a mark for the convenience of not correcting their own work. Nevertheless, those who follow the suggested process agree on the benefits derived from it. This is echoed by Bartram & Walton (1991: 95-97) when they speak of the positive effect of 're-visiting' against 'remedial' strategies when correcting work. And Fitzpatrick & Underwood (1997: 13), although not referring to language learning specifically but to CAI in general, speak of the need "for incentives, for 'good' exemplar material" and of the need "to show benefits to learners [and] to start from where the tutor is".

X. CONCLUSION

IT does not have to instil fear or boredom among students. It can provide not just an alternative learning environment to the standard class, but it may be brought right into the classroom itself, in direct support of the teacher's direct activity. We have seen this with reference to dedicated

language learning shells like *Poetry Shell*, and also to generic applications like the standard word-processor.

Thus, IT can help to bring together the two partners in learning:

- The teacher who does not want to relinquish neither control over the teaching process nor human contact with students and
- The students who, in the context which has been presented here, are specially motivated to do better, and hence to receive the added value of computer literacy within their HE experience.

It can also function in two different roles,

- As a complement somewhat detached from the teacher both in time and space, and
- As integral and immediate tool to enhance classroom activity.

Once again, I would like to refer to D. Wolff's comments on CALL vis a vis generic applications in support of the expansion of the use of the latter in LSA.

Finally, whilst the effectiveness of CALL in its various forms has been challenged at different times from pedagogical, logistic and skill-transfer points of view, word-processors, present themselves above these criticisms. Their effectiveness in language work, especially class-editing, may rely heavily on the teacher's enhanced word-processing skills, but this provides a good argument for the transferability of general computer literacy.

If this helps to promote it among our own students, there are other features waiting to be exploited, for instance, the use of annotations in collaborative work, in the sense in which 'annotations' are used in word-processing.

NOTES

1. A first approach to this methodology was presented to the CILT research forum at Cambridge University in January 1998. See <http://www.linguanet.org.uk/research/resfor2/soria.htm>. It was later developed through various papers and presentations at CALICO conferences and the Intc CTI-Modern Languages at Hull University.

7. The methodology was in place at the time of the last round of inspection of Languages departments by HEFCE, the regulatory and financing British Government agency for English Universities, after which the department was awarded the highest grade for teaching quality among English universities.

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