International Journal of English Studies

IJES

UNIVERSITY OF MURCIA

www.um.es/engphil/ijes

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

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ABSTRACT

Thisarticle 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 compleinentary or suplementary. Typically. tlie 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 coinputer is able to provide can be effectively brought right into the classroom as an integral, intrinsic part of tlie teacher's own activity and that, by doing so, it can enhance not only the teacher's activity but also the coinpleinentary 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 inixed ability and reduced teaching time. In a pedagogical context that, in spite of inission statement 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. coinputer-aided instruction, ICT, Internet, inixed ability, self-access, teacher-coniputer integration, teacher-led learning, word-processing

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I. INTRODUCTION

The methodology dcscribcd in this article has been developed for Spanish Translation seminars at tlie University of Nortliunibria, 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 thrcc latter changes kept demanding constant updating, when not discarding of niaterials, rcworking and renegotiating access arrangements and, most importantly, curricular cliangcs, affected final year students, especially those at either end of the proficiency spectruni. lt was paramount to devise a systeni that would bypass as many difficulties at the time as possibly as well as providing a consistent CALL environment for the foreseeable futurc[2].

Thc nictliodology intcgiatcs standard classrooni practices with iii-class CALL support and, at the sanic time, teacher-lead activities with independent and collaborative learning. It attcmpts to niake use of standard gcneric software available in the widcst public doniain. Whilst froni tlie technical point of view tlie methodology docs not use state-of-the-art language technology, it exploits advanced fcaturcs of standard applications, such as the Word Processor, which arc normally forgottcn by or cven unknown to many tcacliers and gencral users. It also provides almost virtual independence froni tcclinical assistance, thus providing the languagc teaclier witli almost total control of thc whole learning environnient. And because it uses applications available on the central University networh, it does not iniply any disbursement of departmental monies.

Sevcral developmental stages werc piloted between 1995 and 2001, but a systematic study of student usc and performance was never carricd out. This, for a variety of reasons, the ininicdiatc one being tlie continuous changes in technical specifications and adniinistrative procedurcs for liardware and software purchase, access and support, which prevented the continuity of variables required to allow proper observation. There are other pedagogic. practical and cvcn cthical reasons why I do not intend at present to nieasure the levcl of this hypothetical iniprovenient: sctting up a control group would iniply excluding one of tlie three groups taught from a methodology which provides 'academic colierence' AND 'group identity' to all three groups. It would also dcprive individual students from the control group the (hypothetical) extra chances ofsuccess derived froni cxposure, not just to the methodology, but to the added richncss of thc languagc experience offered within tlie overall iiitegrated environnient.

There was a latcr suggcstion that a control group would cnicrge spontaneously by the expedience of sonie students not using the niethodology outside tlie classroom, but it seemed flawcd, bccausc, typically, tliose students would be the least niotivated and thc sample would be biased as a result. Indccd, bctter students or thosc with higher aspirations and, to a lesser extent,

wcaker studenis with a fcar (not necessarily well founded) of failing, were the ones who expresscd greater willingness to try out the methodology.

11. EXTEKNAL LEARNING CONSTRAINTS

First, it must be stressed that tlic IT provision available to Languages departments is not necessarily planned with Modern Languages in niind. Moreover. FL departnients. at least in the UK. will usually tind themselves carrying out a considerable amount of service teaching to other facultics and cven at other campuses, each with its own IT specifications and access rules. In a financial environmcnt where deparimcnts are cost centres, this translates often in students from serviccd courses being denicd access to departmental facilities. There is, however, one comnion dcnominator in IT provision, usually available on the institutional central network, the word proccssor. Hence, its usc as the technical centrepiece of the methodology.

If we scc these constrains against the backdrop of language syllabi which do not normally incorporatc (or cven promote) tlie use of IT, it will be understood that there must be an element of improvisation, of ingenuity and. in tlie actual logistics involved, even of 'picaresque'. The methodology cannot then be fully planncd. It was initially more a question of making do, of teaching 'on tlie hoof'. If, as Belford (1991:161) says. there is no methodology without pliilosopliy, but only method, thc main claim to the appropriateness in using the word *methodology* lics on thc pliilosopliy of need. From the student point of view. there is a need to surmount language lcarning problems brought about by curricular changes, and also the real-life nccd to experience the new teclinologies. Froni 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. Financia1 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 ncw prominent role given to IT both in the classroom at Spanish translation classes in thc UNN and outside it, although a natural progression froni previous uses, responds primarily to a necd to compensate for the rcduced nuniber of teaching weeks which seniesterization has brought and for tlie, in some cases, absence of a formal Spanish placement in year 3. On this last point, Colcman's thorough survcy of language students does not surprise us when we read of the "dramatic impact" which residcncc abroad has on theni (Colenian 1996: 112). But even if "grammar gains are harder to find" than "oral-aura1 fluency, vocabulary and sociolinguistic competence" (op.cit. 58) — we have all visited the bars where this latter competence is acquired, they wcrc always prcscnt. It was these grammar gains that the methodology tries to achieve.

III. THREE LEVELS OF HYPERACTIVITY IN INTEGRATION

To explain tlie multi-level approach to integration offered by this methodology we can look at thc various nieanings of tlic 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 indicatc links between different media, not just between texts. In our contcxt 'hyper' refers to tlie integration and cross-referencing intended between activities: classrooni and laboratory. private study and language class, individual and collaborative effort, computer-centered and teacher-led. Figure 1 offers a scheniatic view of how this third level of integration bctwecn niachine and teacher has developed in our niethodology.

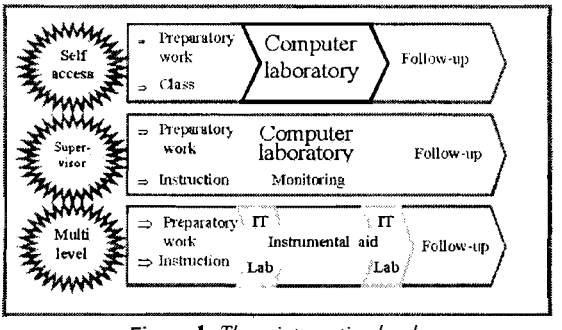


Figure 1: *Three integration levels*

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

IV. METHODOLOGY

A Spanisli placcnient is no longcr a ccrtainty. Sonie students will spend a period in Spain only if they arrange it themselves during vacation tinic, but there is no acadeniic provision coniparable with tlic formal one. Sonie of tlicse students wcre complete beginners on enrolment and after two years of intensive study. tlic pcriod of Spanisli 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 resits. 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 tlie focal position of IT-based teaching. *Figure* 2 offers a flow chart of this instructional cycle:

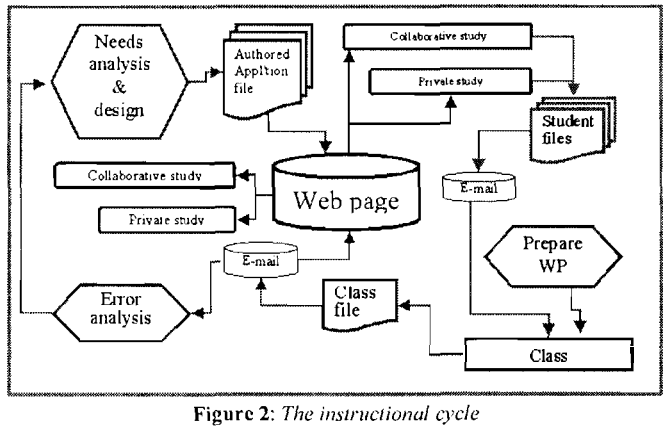


Figure 2: *The instructional cycle*

Translation files bascd on a prcvious needs analysis are prepared using any suitable application. This needs analysis stems partly froni 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 thc filc are describcd later. The file is placed on tlie lecturer's web page and students acccss it cither individually or in teams. The latter is encouraged. Students prepare translations prior to tlie class and e-niail their files to the lecturer prior to the class. During tlie class, studcnt files are loaded to the word processor (Microsoft Word) and viewed with a LCD projector. Since tlie WP allows several files to be displayed at the sanie time, the same scntcnce from eacli student translation filc (up to a niaximum of four) can be viewed simultaneously. This is sct up prior to tlie 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 tlie lecturer.

- A new blank file is creatcd and it grows as eacli student (or a small team of students) agrees on tlie bcst rcndition, 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 tlie reading of tlie sentence in hand.
- There is no new file crcated but studcnt files theniselves are edited.

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

- Tlicy arc studied by tlic lccturer for error and needs analysis
- They arc placed on tlie web for private or joint use by students

Tlierc is a sccond cycle which opcraies when students are given set-work for the purpose of individual monitoring. This takcs place twice a seniestcr, 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 prcparcd by tlie lecturcr and placed on the web. Students correct their translation with reference to this file. Tlie cycle is longer but there are usually between iwo aiid tliree wecks bctween tlie deadline to subniit the translations and the correction class.

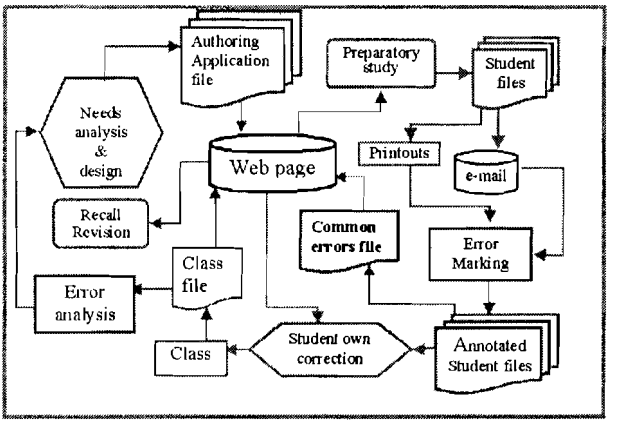


Figure 3: *The testing / monitoring cycle*

It is important to iioic that studcnt files arc annotated and niarks awarded — but not disclosed. Disclosurc takes place only after and only if corrcctions Iiavc been niade. Students may collaborate when they prepare their iranslations as long as they present individual files.

The class revolves in this case around ihe studcnts own corrected files. As with the instructional cyclc, resulting files arc placcd back on tlie web for student revision. Files are also available for tlic lecturer's own error aiid nceds analysis.

VI. THE AUTHORED SOURCE FILE

Originally meant to bc tlie bricks and mortar of both ring circuit and spurs, *Poetry Shell* (OUP, 1992). an authoring packagc devised primarily to tcach poetry, provided good functionality to creatc a scrics of sclf-contained packs, each with hypertext and hypermedia material based on an English tcxt for translation into Spanish.

Poetry Shell was abandoned in 1998 because the university stoppcd offering official support for Assimetrics Toolbook. the application which runs *Poetry Shell*. The shell allowed the creation of packs vcry similar in their conception to tliosc provided later by TELL's *TransIt Tiger Authoring Shell*. Botli offcrcd an original source tcxt, a niodcl translation, a glossary and hints or notes, all in a liypcrtcxt environment. It lacked some of the advantages of power and user-friendliness (Sor both author and user) brouglit by later developments in IT, but it had the advantagc of providing liyperlinks from tlie glossary to a graniniar. the possibility of two or more contrasting translations, additional supporting texts (e.g. on background) and somc multimedia (visual) suppoit. Developcd originally with Anglo-Saxon poctry in mind (hencc the title), the shell was flexible cnougli to bc adapted to thc principlcs earlier in this article.

The *Poetry Shell* environment was later recrcated using *AOL-press*, a web-authoring application pi-ovided by tlic Internet provider AOL. *AOL-press* is still functional but AOL does not support it any more. Today, tlie same type of cnvironnicnt is easily achieved using a standard word processor with tlie ability to convert .doc files to .html or any simple web-page design package. Eitlier way, each translation pack is made available on the Internet within seconds of creation. Tlic files witli wliich translation packs are built are always WP (.doc) files and can, therefore bc instantly converted and iniported into any wcb-authoring package used, indcpcndcntly of tlie presentational format uscd.

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

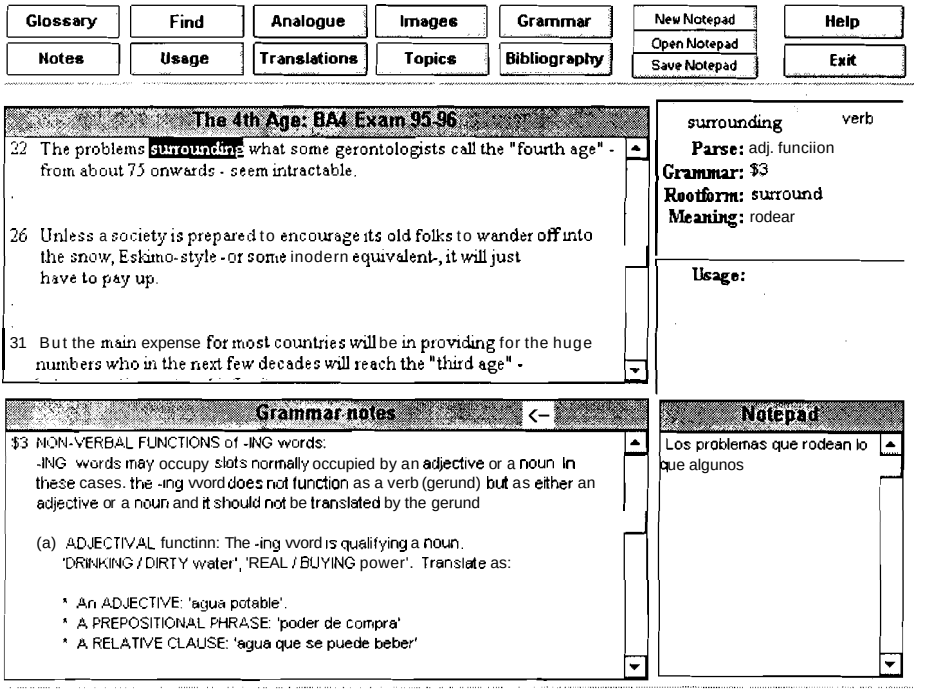


Figure 4: *Poetry Shell pack: English text and Grammar notes*

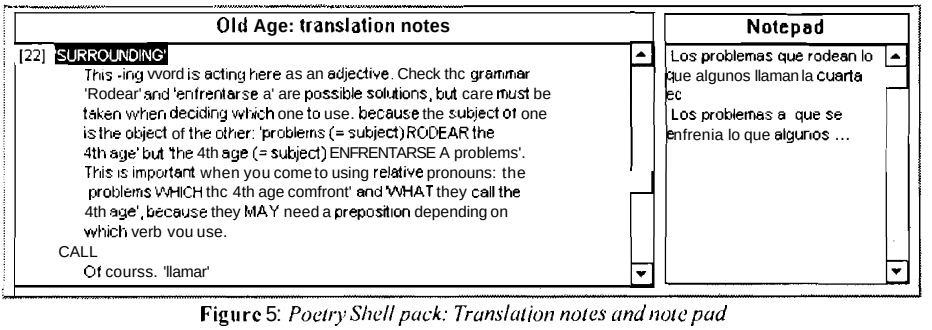


Figure 5: *Poetry Shell pack: Translation notes and note pad*

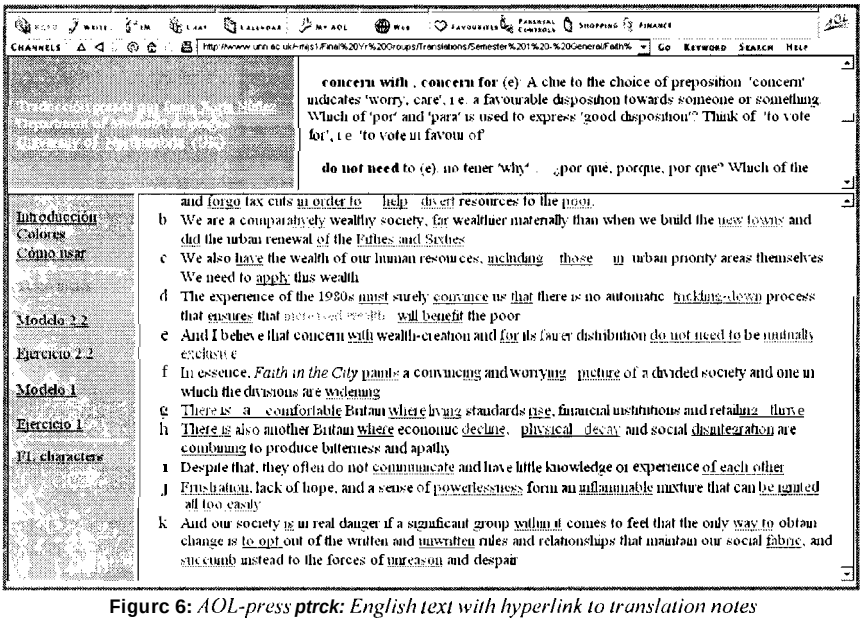


Figure 6: *AOL-press* ***ptrck:*** *English text with hyperlink to translation notes*

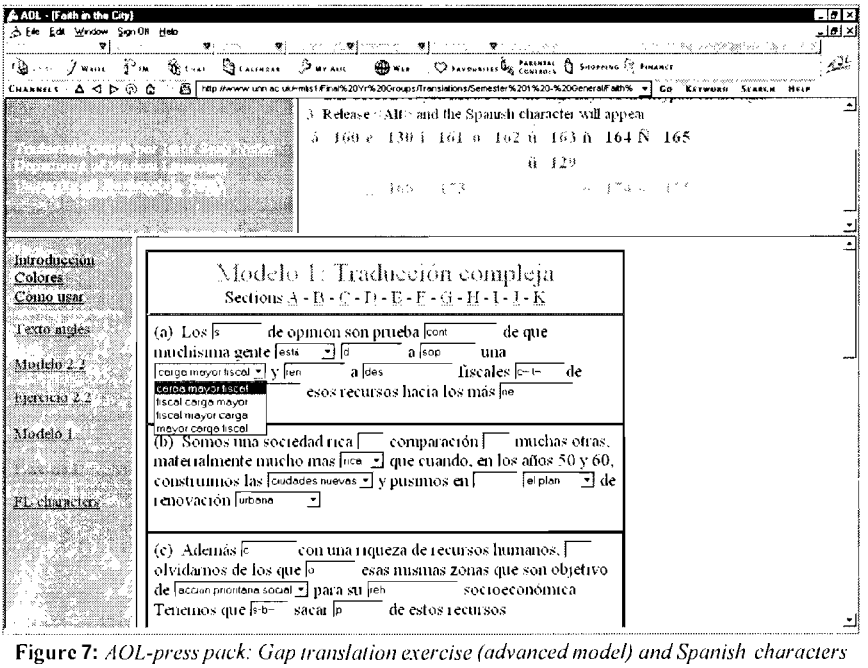
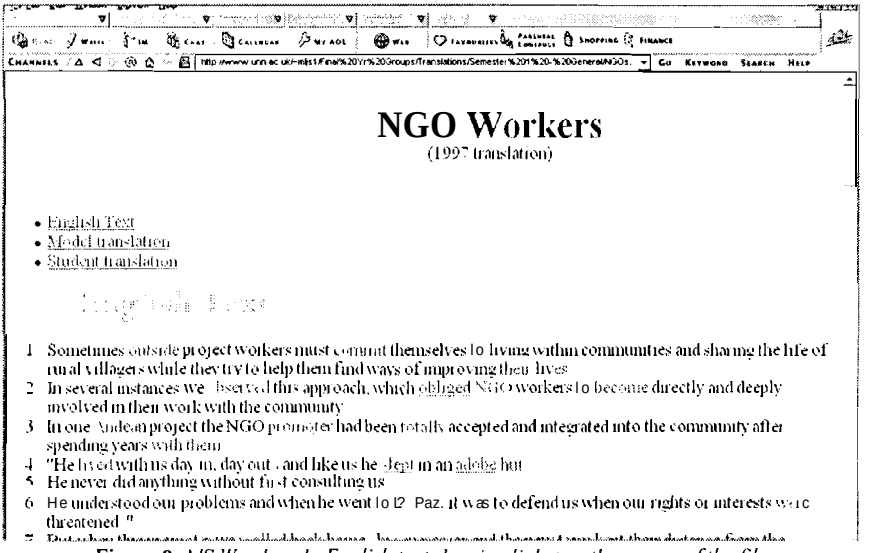


Figure 7: *AOL-press pack: Gap translation exercise (advanced model) and Spanish characters help file*



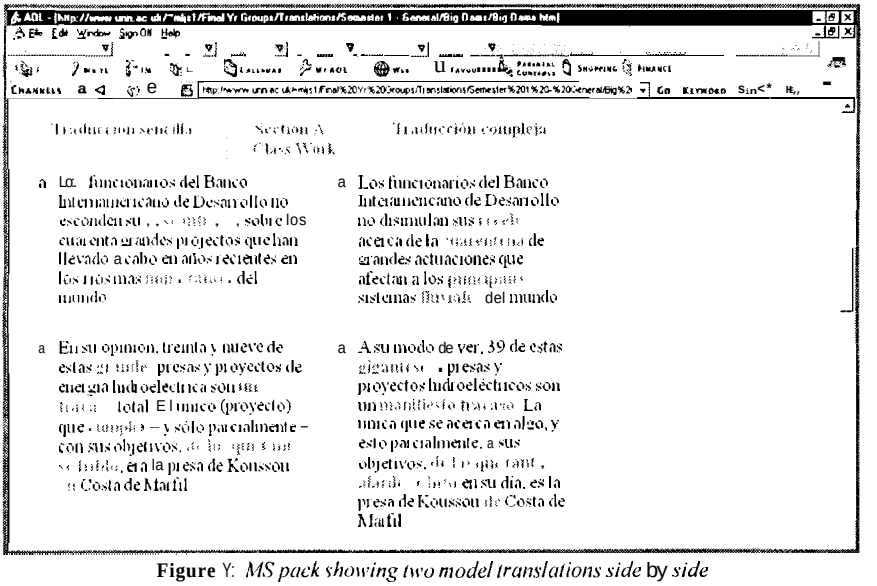
NGO Workers

(1997 translation)

- English Text
- Model translation
- Student translation

1 Sometimes outside project workers must commit themselves to living within communities and sharing the life of rural villagers while they try to help them find ways of improving their lives
2 In several instances we observed this approach, which obliged NGO workers to become directly and deeply involved in their work with the community
3 In one Andean project the NGO promoter had been totally accepted and integrated into the community after spending years with them
4 "He lived with us day in, day out, and like us he slept in an adobe hut
5 He never did anything without first consulting us
6 He understood our problems and when he went to La Paz, it was to defend us when our rights or interests were threatened."

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



Traducción sencilla — Section A: Class Work — Traducción compleja

a La funcionarios del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo no esconden su [illegible] sobre los cuarenta grandes proyectos que han llevado a cabo en años recientes en los ríos más [illegible] del mundo

a Los funcionarios del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo no disimulan sus [illegible] acerca de la [illegible] de grandes actuaciones que afectan a los principales sistemas fluviales del mundo

a En su opinión, treinta y nueve de estas gigantescas presas y proyectos de energía hidroeléctrica son un fiasco total. El único (proyecto) que cumple —y sólo parcialmente— con sus objetivos, de los que [illegible] se habla, es la presa de Kossou en Costa de Marfil

a A su modo de ver, 39 de estas gigantescas presas y proyectos hidroeléctricos son un manifiesto fracaso. La única que se acerca en algo, y esto parcialmente, a sus objetivos, de los que [illegible], hablaremos en su día, es la presa de Kossou de Costa de Marfil

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

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

Thc components of tlie source translation pack are tlie following:

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

VI.1. *Shell* Authoring Packages

Uscrs ofpackagcs sucli as Poetry Shell or any of tlie recreations nientioned above approach shell authoring differently, cspccially in what concerns the degrce of targeting included in the glossary and otlicr liclp files. Holmes (1997), for instance, considers that students should make tlie effort to jump from a general meaning to a more spccific one fitting the context, so tliat they "learn not to trust tlie definitions" provided. My own view differs froni this, but I do not propose to discuss it here beyond saying tliat the packs described in this article provide both the information rcquircd to learn and tlic opportunity to do tlic translation without rcfcrence to the notes. How iiiucli help is iiicludcd. whether specific, generic or in clue form is a niatter ofjudgcnient which can only be cxcrciscd by tlie tcaclier. Ol'course. tlic teacher must be the autlior of such a package for it makes little sensc to create it witliout prior knowledge of tlie specific needs and aspirations of students, their deficiencies and abilities. This is why thc teacher occupics centre stage in this methodology while technology is only instrumental in its delivery.

Other obscrvcrs also coninicnt on positivc aspects of such packages as wcll as being aware of basically tlic same problenis. Thus, Beedham (1995: 2.3) reports on studcnts (especially tlic niorc advaiiccd ones) approacliiiig *The Dream of the Rood (Poetry Shell)* with fun-derived eiitliusiasiii whilst Holmes (1997) rcfcrs to *Transit Tigers*'s potential for Swedisli with niixed ability groups aiid Small (1997: 5), to its suitability for post-beginncrs use. Among niy own students, tlic better oncs (wlictlicr in attitude or performance) were also in a majority aiiiong thosc willing to usc tlic packagc.

On tlic other hand, the saiiic authors highlight tlie dangcrs which the unusual aniount of help offered by these 'rich cnviroiiiients' can bring, aniong theni 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 autonomous 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 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, lience. the group's as a whole, is iniproved.

VII. IN-CLASS EDITING WITH MS WORD

The idea of using generic applications as general tcacliing aids is not new. This is not surprising because, having a widcr markct, they tcnd to incorporatc more sopliisticated features than dedicatcd teaching ones. It is perfectly possible, Ior instance, to use databases for language work (not just for data handling or rctrieving). This has been donc carlier — in my case witli the old dBase raiigc. Powerpoint is uscd cxtensively in certain UNN Spanish courses and even spreadsheets lcnd themselves to language teacliing purposes to tlie extent to which they can handle characters. All this has bcen especially possible since the development of suits of applications, such as Microsoft Office.

However, studcnts require special training in their usc, wliicli is oftcn unavailable to mainstream laiiguagc degrcc studcnts, and unaffordablc, in time if anything else, to languages departments. Students aiid colleagues react witli sccpticisni and even opcn antagonisni to the idea of using applications wliicli arc 'alien' to language studies. Howcver, students froni 'serviced courses', typically from business-related dcgrccs who already come witli a knowledge of these non-language-based applications. are able to approacli them with a more opcn niind.

As for word-proccssing. its usc has also bccn limited in language teaching in spite of the obvious appcal that it should have had. The fact that languagc teachers havc uscd it mainly for inputting text (and this includes creative writing) has prcvcnted us froni cxploring its actual potential Sor processing tlic written word much bcyond cutting and pasting or increasing tlie text's presentational appcal. Whilst Groundwater-Smith (1993: 11) highlights Iiow cditing can go beyond "merely attending to surface structures (...) and lead to accuniulated re-conceptualising of the written piece", Felix & Lawson (1996: 13) report on tlic increasing use and positivc outcomes of word-proccssing for languagc teaching mostly in EFL projects. However, we are still dcaling mainly, if not cxclusivcly, with tlie writing process, as D. Wolff (1993: 23) demonstrates when he speaks of his conviction "that the word processor is a valuable tool aiid help facility iii laiiguagc learning", for if refers to procedural matters.

This is a very wortliy usc but one tliat, in exclusivity, does not do full justicc to an application dedicatcd to the proccssing of text. as I shall try to dcnionstrate shortly.

This underuse of tlic word-processor may bc due to two factors:

- The presence of 'competing' dcdicated applications. perceivcd as tlie natural SLA tools providcd by IT, i.e. CALL — wliicli brings back to niind Goodfellow's carlier refercnce to

tlie invcrsc relationship bctwcen CALL and standard applications as far as student appeal is conccriicd.

- Our failure to react to T. Wolfe's general assertion, as early as 1968 (see Curtis 1993: 98), tliat "tlie new technologies (...) liavc beconie a new environnicnt (...) that radically alters the entire wny people use tlieir five scnscs". Monteith (1993: 1) has applied this to language: "microcomputers bring with them thc possibility of pedagogical reforni as commonplace practices change to acconiniodatc them."

Word processing is very useful to put into practice Felix and Lawson's (1997: 13) advice tliat "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. Sonic are explicitly word-processing ones but there are many more wliich, usually discarded aprioristically as purely cosmetic or extraneous to language, offer nevertheless tlie transparency wliich D. Wolff (1993: 27) claims is necessary during thc learning process for students to acquire declarative and procedural knowledge. It can be argued that this transparency helps in tlic context in which "tlic development of proficiency in a second language depends on the automatization of processes tliat are Grst niastered 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 Test

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

- YELLOW indicates general alertness and points at conconiitant changes, typically gender / number agreement and verb tense sequencing, among otliers. In our exaniple, it also alerts students to tlic 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 attciition on tlie issuc for as long as therc are references to 'people'.

- INTERSECTING OVALS over conconiitant clianges suggest that the doubly-cnclosed phrase could function in two or more ways. In our example, should 'its old folk' be treated as the objcct of 'encourage' or as the 'subject' of 'to wander'?
- GREEN indicates freedom of niovenient and points at the possibility of putting into practice certain strategics or trying out alternative structures. It alerts students, for instance, to the differcnt possible rendiiions of adjectival plirases (En. 'between the generations' versus Sp. 'intergencracional'), or to vcrbs of beconiing (En. 'get older' v. Sp 'se hacen viejos' or 'cnvcjecen'). An altcrnative for En. preposition 'about' could be the Sp. adjective 'unos'
- RED-MAGENTA is uscd to warn of danger: stop before you rush into translating. It alerts studciits to their niost common gramniatical and lexical errors. Thus students should think twicc before translating En. 'argunicnt' as Sp 'argumento'; the structure 'AS COMPAKATIVE ... COMI'ARATIVE' deserves special attention: Sp. 'como' may not be tlie corrcct translation Sor 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 nativc speaker — there is no point in getting it wrong just out of sheer ignorance. Thus, while 'Eskinio' and 'intractable' would normally require dictionary help, 'burgcon' requires help beyond the dictionary, for the dictionary suggestion of 'prosper' clashes semantically witli tlie 'unwelcome increased expenditure' derived froni tlie context; similarly witli 'nursing care' the dictionary could lead to tautologies like 'cuidado cuidadoso' or unlikely dcad-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 abovc csplains, by cditing either a brand new file created in class or student files subniitted via e-niail and preloaded to thc WP. In both cases tlie editing process takes place as students offer their translations or coninients. The idea is to record on the resulting .doc file as niuch as possible of what is transactcd in tlie class. This real-time cditing requires from the teacher a high level of proficiency in thc use of tlie WP.

VII.3. Teacher Erpertise in IT

The WP provides scvcral predefinable ways of correctiny and annotating text.

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

Key to highlights on English text: [redacted] Concomitant changes [redacted]

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

El ~~argumento~~ conflicto entre las generaciones _ no es _ ~~solo~~ sólo sobre las pensiones. Los Gastos ~~medicales~~ médicos también, ~~prosperarán~~ aumentarán ~~como~~ a medida que _ la gente envejece _. Tampoco es ???? el cuidado ~~para~~ de los ancianos sobre ~~las provision 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 wdean b que ~~dicen~~ algunos gerontólogos llaman "la cuarta edad" - bs de más de unos 75 años - parecen inextricables _. A menos que una sociedad esté dispuesta a alentar a sus ~~viejos~~ 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 ~~dolencia~~ 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 ?????
los servicios médicos; la asistencia sanitaria.
más avanzada
a partir de los 75 años; de los 75 años en adelante.
insolubles
or: "encourage that its old folks wonder ..." Any preference?

Figure *10:* *In-class edited student file*

The 'track clianges' function provides a very eflicient way of making fast and clear changes to thc original icxt and is a favouritc in this niethodology. The function can be tailored so tliat characters acquirc ncw text features to signify various things. Thus, replaced text, i.e. wrong translation, rather than being deleted, can be turned pale grey, crosscd-out and given a pitch slightly smaller than the original. This would not interfere with thc readability of the whole tcxt.

Rcplacing text, i.e. corrcctions. is set to bold dark magenta, not too diffcrcnt froni the original font, thus making it stand out while affording rcadability.

Once these settings arc in place and for as long no one clsc tampers with them, the editing happens automatically as you type. Thc samplc provided in figure

Altcrnaiive renditions can be graded by using smaller font sizes. Explanations may bc added as footnotcs and connections between words by means of hyperlinks and bookmarks. For this to work cfficiently in tlic classroom, 'shortcuts' (usually prc-defined kcy combinations with <Ctrl>, <Alt> or both) must bc sccond nature to thc tcacher, since they allow instant editing. There are niany shortcuts that allow tlie ieacher to move instantaneously from any part of the text to another or to highlight in niany ways any amount of tcxt, decreasc or increase font size, lengthcn. shorten or switch the highlight, etc.

In additioii, niacros providc immense extra functionality. A niacro is a mini-program that perforins a vcry spccilic task. It can bc created without knowing any programming languages by just going oncc through the steps rcquircd for thai task to be perfornied. The functionality of niacros comcs to its own in tlic classrooni when thcy are assigncd a key combination which has not bcen prealocated as a 'shortcut' for any prcdcfined function. The combination <Ctrl S> for instance is tlic shortcut for 'Save', i.e. it savcs you froni going through the menus, and is prcdcfincd. But tlie combination <Alt R8>, for instance, may bc assigned to turn words to font size X in red. It would takc undci a sccond to do it.

Thc 'Autocorrection' function can equally be tailorcd to introduce automatically special characters such as arrows. without having to go through all tlie menus. For instancc tlie arrow a has bcen crcatcd hcrc by typing - - > without gaps.

As well as cditing text. tlic tcacher can. if circumstances suggcst it. add a number of symbols so that tlic class may focus thcir attention onto something which was dcalt with bcfore or needs to bc taken into account belorc attempting a translation. Bluc arrows indicate suggcsted word ordcr cliangcs and can bc inserted by way of a niacro.

Thc ability to hide tcxt (without delcting it) and makc it rc-enicrge is especially useful to isolate tlic components of a main clausc from cnibcddcd and other clauses, for instance, and, vice versa,

to identify those cnibedded clauses, or any other coniponents of whatever length, however truncated and wherever locatcd within tlie sentence.

VIII. FINDINGS

I'lic cxpcricncc of this methodology is not uniform across the years, but varies according to niany variables outside tlic teacher's control, e.g. missing cable, projector not bcing delivered to the classroom in time, studcnts not adhering to standards on subniission of files. But on the whole. as long as tlic teacher has control ovcr thc PC, laptop (preferably) or desktop, classroom practice is as consistent as in any otlicr situation tliat docs not rely on IT. The niost consistcnt findings are these:

- Improved attention and concentration. Studcnts' responses include reasons like:
  - I'lic overall novclty of tlie methodology; because they did not have any previous experience of this, they did not have expectations and, therefore, they did not know exactly what wns likely to Iiappcn ncxt.
    - o A feeling ol'rccciving special trcatnicnt: they are doing soniething whicli is more exciting than in otlicr classes.
    - o I'lic brightness of tlic scrccn and tlie colours
    - □ 'I'lie movements of cursor and highlights catches their eye and their attention.
    - o They do not have to do it; tlie teacher does it!
- Makes grammatical points niucli more transparcnt and clear (see D. Wolff, earlier).
- The aliiiost total absciice of clutter typical of standard OHPs (Felix & Lawson: 1993: 13), let alone white or black boards, provides an iniproved general sensc of order and organisation. This works promotes tlie studcnts' iniprcssion tliat tlie teaclicr knows what he or she is doing and. iii turn, boosts their confidence in tlic overall process.
- It feels more likc editing than correcting: "*you don't feel as awful even if your translation is heavily edited*". It is important to add hcrc tliat, although the overall strategy was intended to lessen student's overall anxicty, this was an unexpectcd coninient in as niucli as it referred to a corrccting proccss, wliicli tends to increase tcnsion (Bartram & Walton 1991: 36-27 and Coleman 1996: 131). This reduction in nnxicty may be attributcd to one or more of the following factors:
  - Verbal activity is distributed almost equally among corrccting errors, finding alternatives (e.g. synonyms or structural transformations based on alternative parts of speech) and expanding oii 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 tlie pernianence of the edited-out original words in the final text, the colour schenie and tlie 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, studcnts may conccntrate more on screcn activity, i.e. language work, than on the intervcning pcrsons. i.e. the teacher or the student whose extract is being corrected).

Up to here, studcnts comments with which I am compelled to agree. It is possible to add, liowcvcr. tlic following oncs:

- My own impression that, at least class performance, is better than belorc, in spite of the absence of thorough quantitativc data.
- The permanence which tlie final files provide has interesting outconies and it has also promptcd considerations wliich wcrc not conteniplatcd at the outset:
- Tliis permanence woiks both in time and place, for nothing has to be rubbed off and, therefore, cvcrytliing is available at a key-stroke, even if it is not visible at that time.
- Additionally, at the end of the seniester or acadeniic year there is a full record, accessible to cvcryonc. not only of each individual class, but also of tlie whole seniester, year, etc.
- This provides tlie 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 developnient was to use concordancers such as OCP (OUP) or TACT (Univcrsity of Toronto) to carry out a more detailed analysis. Both were used for a variety of specific purposcs.
- As Sor students, they are likely to fccl more valucd as their own comments or altcrnatives are included in tlic file. Wcakcr students may glow with self-esteem when they havc been given tlic opportunity to niakc a rclcvant conimcnt, even if it was not particularly inspiring, and it has cndcd up in the final file.

Finally. and most importantly, there seems to bc a pcrfect marriage of hunian and machine roles.

- This enhances the value of IT in students' eyes, for it docs not work against their "majority feeling that tlic tcacher or tlic class is essential for iniprovemcnt" and that tlie classroom "is the key framework for their languagc learning" (Broady 1997).
- It helps to dispel the cult-like niystique wliich doniinates the way some people approach IT. Curtis (1993: 99-100) explains Ihde's argunient that the deiinition of boundaries between

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

Therc may bc. liowcvcr, a few sliortcomings whosc real iniportance is difficult to assess:

- Loss of cyc-contact was initially tlie niost disappointing one by far. However, as familiarity with cditing procedurcs iniproved. it stopped being a problem, in much the same way as it is perfectly possible Sor conipetent readers to lift their eyes from the page witliout stopping tlic flow, or for good typists to type witliout looking at the keyboard.
- Thc amount of text covercd in class was also reduced at the start. Again, this improved considerably with tinic levels of coverage wcrc soon rcached equal to those in previous years. This was not a real worry anyway. for tcxts are chosen for the specific problems they illustratc (the result of previous error-analysis) and tlicse problcms are reviewed in more than oiic tcxt. And, in any case. one of the functions of the source files is precisely to provide this covcr in tlie forni of self study after tlie class.
- The fact tliat tlie nictliodology was being developed practically in front of the students' very cycs, addcd on occasions a degrec of inconsistcncy and even incompetence, which made me more uncasy than tlic students.
- And finally, tlic cxpectcd and ubiquitous problenis which we encounter with IT in general and which are due. alniost always, to our own deficiencies in IT skills, both in hardware and software tcrnis. However, this should not just detract us froni experinicnting with IT; quite tlic opposite, it should iniprint in our niinds the need to come to terms with technology and cither train oursclves or dcniand training support to develop tliese skills.

IX. INDIVIDUAL MONITOKING: ANNOTATING, MARKING AND CORRECTING

Language lcarning is a highly individualised proccss (Wolff 1993: 12) and, as such, it requires individualiscd nionitoring. if only becausc students tend to perccive correction and individual feedback as a yard stick for nieasuring tlie teaclier's coniinitnient. Also, falling short of their cxpectations leads to sonic anxicty (Bartram & Walton 1991: 27). Additionally, in spite of all the gains dcrivcd from collaborative work, "collective meaning-making is inconsistent with the proccsses of asscssnient and crcdentialing", (Groundwater-Sniith 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 keener 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, presenting 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 Inter CTI-Modern Languages at Hull University.

7. The methodology was in place at the time of the last round of inspections 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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