



Schritt halten mit dem Web: die Aufgabe lösen

Uschi Felix, Melbourn

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Uschi Felix, Melbourne

Resources on the World Wide Web are growing at breakneck speed and at a volume that is beginning to overwhelm even the keenest of surfers. While the body of materials available for language learning is relatively small by comparison with other subjects, two issues are still of concern – duplication and complexity. Effort is being duplicated in a variety of areas and, as sites multiply, it becomes harder to locate the material that is both useful and excellent.

This paper summarises the findings of a four-year survey of approaches to language teaching and learning via the Web (Felix 1998, 2001). The pace of development can be seen in the fact that the later publication has expanded its coverage to include Webquests, collaborative activities, sites for children, the growing world of publishers' sites and metasites, as well as software tools and aids to professional development. It has also incorporated the very large category of English language sites into the main database.

The purpose of the survey was to find examples of best practice in whole stand-alone courses, integrated mixed-model courses (Web/CD-ROM/face-to-face), and interactive exercises for the development of all four skills.

The findings suggest that, in some languages at least, a large number of excellent resources exist. Even better, there are enough to make it more economical to integrate the best materials into existing courses, rather than spend time and money repeating work that has already been done.

INTRODUCTION

The use of the Web for language teaching is relatively recent, with the first materials appearing in the early 90s. The impact, however, has been considerable, mainly because the technology has advantages over the previous generation of CALL. It is cheaper and easier to develop; it is often cheaper and easier to run; and it offers real possibilities for authentic interaction. Advantages include the ease of development across platforms, and the availability of free software like applets, helper applications and plug-ins. This help extends all the way up to sites that allow non-technophiles to create respectable interactive exercises. Prominent among these are:

Hot Potatoes Half-Baked Software <http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked>

QUIA <http://www.quia.com/>

Headlines-Makers <http://lang.swarthmore.edu/makers/>

London Guildhall University Department of Languages <http://www.lgu.ac.uk/langstud/call/>

WebPractest <http://www.wm.edu/CAS/modlang/gasmit/webpractest/>

WELL Language Exercises <http://www.well.ac.uk/languageExercises/>

In general, the expertise is available at little or no cost. *London Guildhall University* makes a modest charge for a site licence, while *Hot Potatoes*, which is a commercial site, makes much of its software available without charge to non-profit educational institutions. Other sites like *WELL* are co-operative ventures, where the payment for access to the software takes the form of making exercises based on it available to the whole group. In similar vein, some sites like *QUIA* – which has now introduced a fee-based Premium service offering extra features - strongly encourage users to post back work for others to use. These sites are an encouraging example of the potential for worldwide collaboration to develop. Such collaboration will offset one of the downsides of the increasing ability to develop materials in-house without excessive reliance on expert help – namely the proliferation of sites that duplicate the work of others.

As with all IT solutions, Web delivery has its problems.

- Access is still often unreliable and slow, especially from modems.
- Some students dislike, and even actively resist, working with the Web (or any IT), or find the experience isolating.
- The Web is not as well suited to delivery of sound and video as CD-ROM.
- Oral production skills are seldom supported meaningfully.

While most of these problems can be addressed (Felix 2001), others such as time commitment, the financial return on investment, and administrative concerns continue to weigh on the Web, as on CALL in general.

Despite all this, the biggest advantage is perhaps that Web technology offers the possibility of tailoring an impressive and useful resource at speed and without the need for much technical expertise. It is becoming easier, for example, to provide course-specific activities in the shape of Webquests, or through the use of chats and bulletin boards. Moreover, it is relatively trouble-free to provide students with access to extensive material simply by linking to existing sites and thus exploiting the work of others. It is extraordinary how generous non-commercial developers can be towards what might in a different context be seen as theft

of intellectual property. Some sites explicitly authorise exploitation; others welcome links but appreciate the courtesy of being informed that the link has been established; while others ask that permission be sought for any copying, including the wholesale copying involved in mirroring the site. It is obvious that commercial pressures also exist, with several sites seeking to find ways of generating income to support expensive development, but, in general the Web is still characterised by a willingness to allow material to be used at no cost for non-profit educational purposes.

Where sound is concerned, early delivery was cumbersome and involved frustratingly slow download times. However, Real Audio is now prevalent and streaming is commonplace. As a result good quality audio is being provided by a great number of sites. By contrast, video is still fairly rare, although the latest streaming technology is encouraging more and more developers to include short clips, as in *Virtual Wedding* <http://www.eng.umu.se/vw/Default.htm>. The advantage of streaming audio and sound is that download times are significantly faster. For more detailed technical information see the excellent guides by Goodwin-Jones (2000a,b)

In a site like *Global English* <http://www.globalenglish.com/>, we are also now seeing some experimentation with voice recording through the use of customised software that can be downloaded by the user. The most exciting newcomers are voice chats and voice bulletin boards, which are filling the gap of spoken interaction online. For an example of this user-friendly technology, see the *Wimba* site <http://www.wimba.com/>.

THE TASK

The Web is bewildering in its variety. Where languages are concerned, we know that an enormous amount of work is being done to put on to the Web a wide range of materials, all the way up to whole courses. What we do not know is how to access this material efficiently.

The problem is first of all one of size. Exploring any single site in detail is already time-consuming; exploring all available sites is at the very least daunting and may be impossible. And that problem grows by the day as sites multiply. This is happening notably in the major world languages that dominate the teaching system and the Web, but sometimes even

languages of rather low enrolment are not exempt. What, for example, are we to make of the fact that at least three different sites teaching the basic structures of Swahili are simultaneously under construction?

What we see everywhere on the Web is an ever-expanding multiplication of sites at all levels - individual exercises, courses of varying ambition, and metasites that seek to catalogue everything available in any one language or even in all languages together. Search engines do not provide a great deal of help in this environment, because the problem is not to locate the myriad of sites available, but to evaluate them - to discover not only what each does but also how well it does it.

This overview cannot be comprehensive but only representative of trends (see Felix 2001 for a more extended list of sites). It would be interesting and illuminating to provide early and late examples of every activity, as a graphic demonstration of the improvements that rapidly emerging software has made possible. The problem here, though, is locating early examples. Sites that remain active naturally tend to change with the technology, and their more primitive first forms disappear from the Web. This means that early experiments may be visible only on fossilised sites on which development has stopped. But fossilised sites do not necessarily remain on the Web, so the historical record tends to disappear from the virtual world.

While German examples are included in each section, what follows is a broadly categorised overview of how the Web is being used for CALL. It covers a range of languages, because it is often useful to look at work that is being done in other languages (or even other subjects) before embarking on curriculum development. Visiting a variety of sites in languages other than the one that is our focus may provide an insight into different approaches, and stimulate ideas well beyond our own socio-cultural boundaries.

Early materials

The earliest materials took the form of textbooks on the Web, grammar exercises, and large and ever growing collections of materials, often without much structure to guide the uninitiated user. They have all undergone continuous change. Examples are Gary Smith's *German Electronic Textbook* <http://www.wm.edu/CAS/modlang/grammnu.html> and the

Bucknell Russian Program

<http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/index.html>.

Virtual classrooms

These divide into two major groups – commercial and non-commercial. Given the costs of developing and maintaining a large course on the Web, the drive to earn an income is understandable. Apart from anything else, if evaluation is not entirely computer-based, how are the teachers to be paid? The same question applies to any human interaction – by e-mail or, particularly, by voice – that the students might be given. Substantial human resources are needed to support major sites, and it is extremely unlikely that they can be provided without cost for any length of time.

Not surprisingly, therefore, a lot of the stand-alone courses on the Web are fee-paying and password protected, though some also offer free materials, in the shape either of an initial example lesson to show prospective students what the course is like, or of extra-curricular material like games. The sites cover a wide range, from one person operations *Interdeutsch* <http://www.interdeutsch.de> and *Cyberitalian* <http://cyberitalian.com>, to small team enterprises like *Texthaus* <http://www.texthaus.com> and *EuroDeutsch Online* <http://www.biblia.it/austria/>, and all the way up to large organisations like the *Centro Virtual Cervantes* <http://cvc.cervantes.es/portada.htm>, which has ambitions to set up an unusually extensive set of fee-paying Web-based language courses, or *GlobalEnglish* <http://www.globalenglish.com> which employs considerable staff and offers a 24 hour attended chat site and other extensive services. This latter site is an excellent one to keep in view, since it is technically competent and tends to be an early adopter of advances in the technology. Its quality may be an illustration of the fact that successful commercial sites that generate enough income to support development are most likely to be in the vanguard (this point is often made about the technical expertise embedded in pornography sites).

One of the most attractive courses on the Web, which is distinguished by its imaginative use of graphics, is *Lina und Leo* <http://www.goethe.de/z/50/linaleo/mainmen2.htm>. Other substantial free courses in German include *LernNetz* <http://www.skolinternet.telia.se/TIS/tyska/> and pioneer Peter Gözl' *German for travellers*

<http://web.uvic.ca/pgolz-gft/>. This latter has a rather misleading name, since it is of wider interest than the run of courses on the Web for tourists, and earlier names like *German for beginners* or *Deutsch online* look more appropriate. The course is of interest, however, as an illustration of the journey that a University-based pioneer has followed in moving out into the more commercial world. Gölz is one of those developers who does not charge fees, but is attempting to generate an income by other means, like an on-line shop and advertising.

Grammar exercises

There are a multiplicity of grammar exercises on the Web, most of them using multiple choice questions or fill-ins, usually but not always in the context of a whole sentence. Some are an integral part of a structured course. Occasionally, this is a Web-based course, with exercises linked to pages that explain the structures. More often the exercises supplement an off-line course, and may be linked directly to specific textbooks. This is understandably the case with the rapidly growing publishers' sites set up to support the books they are selling (see below).

For examples in German, see *the German Electronic Textbook* and *Studienbibliothek* <http://www.interdeutsch.de/studien1.htm> which is an open access collection of exercises attached to *Interdeutsch*. Good examples of extensive structured sets of grammar exercises that can be worked through sequentially can be found in both the French and Spanish sites of the University of Texas at Austin <http://www.lamc.utexas.edu/fr/home.html> and <http://www2.sp.utexas.edu/SP506/student.qry/>. All exercises in both languages follow the same pattern, so the student has to learn only one set of conventions to navigate around the site. Even after 4 years, the French course remains a good example of user-friendliness in the way that materials are used both on- and off-line. Equally impressive are the very attractive exercises compiled by the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) http://www.aatg.org/teaching_resources/vol_1-2/web_exercises/index.html.

Grammar exercises are also available in more or less unstructured heaps with the user left to pick out the bits that will be helpful without much in the way of guidance. *French Grammar Central*, for example, http://globegate.utm.edu/french/globegate_mirror/gramm.html draws on over 400 sites from across the Web, and sorts the material only roughly into 12 very general categories like Adjectives, Articles and Determiners. One drawback to these

collections - which is also potentially the drawback to using the work of others in any course - is that approaches will almost inevitably vary, so that users have to get used to different ways of using the material. This may not be a great problem, but it is a distraction nonetheless. Ideally, material would be presented in one way that students can quickly get used to. A similar site for German does not seem to exist, but it would be easy enough to create – even if excellence and a high level of student-friendliness would require a great deal of work on the part of the compiler.

Quizzes, games, templates

There are a variety of ready-made templates to choose from for the creation of quizzes and games online. For example, *Hot Potatoes* offers six applications for the creation of interactive multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled-sentence, matching/ordering, crossword and gap-fill exercises for the Web, while *Headlines-Makers* offers Cloze tests; two column matching, and matching with drag and drop; multiple choice including true/false; ordering scrambled sentences; and a memory game with tiles.

Similarly, the user-friendly and extensive *Quia* is an excellent source both for developers and for users, with templates that allow games and quizzes to be created very quickly in many languages. Students can then access the material and the site will keep global statistics on performance. Of the more than 600,00 activities that are freely available, some 700 are available in 31 language categories. The great majority of the work so far has been done in French and Spanish, with fewer exercises available in German (74 at the end of October, compared to 245 in French and 218 in Spanish), but this is a site that is destined to grow inexorably as it calls on the services of creators worldwide.

Webquests

Webquests constitute one of the most rapidly developing areas in Web teaching. Originally, the work took the form of task-based activities like those in *German Internet Chronicles* http://www.uncg.edu/~lixlpurc/GIP/german_units/UnitsCover.html/, where students were given a task to carry out which involved accessing relevant German Web sites, compiling information on a specific topic, and giving answers to questions. At this early stage, a set of

questions might be presented on-screen, but there was no facility for answering them on-screen, nor for sending the answers electronically to the tutor. Both these features are now standard across the Web, again most successfully demonstrated in the AATG collection http://www.aatg.org/teaching_resources/vol_1-2/web_activities/index.htm.

Since the early days, activities have shifted to elaborate information gap exercises like *Dream Holiday* <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~flemrw/dreamholiday/>, problem-solving ventures such as *Travelsim* <http://deil.lang.uiuc.edu/travelsim/>, or quests linked to specific events such as *Eddie and Spike's Great Virtual Olympic Adventure* <http://www.schools.nt.edu.au/olsu/olyadvent/menu.htm>.

For an illuminating introduction to the whole area, and an excellent source of ideas in a variety of subjects, see *A WebQuest about WebQuests* <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquestwebquest-hs.html>.

Publishers' Web material

This is another of the fastest growing areas with publishers like Heinle & Heinle <http://www.heinle.com/sites.html/>, Prentice Hall <http://www.prenhall.com/pubguide/index.html/>, and Harcourt College Publishers <http://www.harcourtcollege.com/worldlanguages/> providing a large variety of supplementary materials geared to their textbooks. Some of the material is grammatical, but task-based activities have become increasingly common. These range from the early simple on screen pro-formas for printing out, to more recent developments allowing for on-screen emailing to the tutor, to online animated problem-solving activities created with Macromedia Flash as in the BBC's *Spywatch* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/lookandread/>. The latter is one of the best examples so far of how animation rather than video can be used to great effect. A common feature of sites is the provision of resources for teachers. In the case of Prentice Hall, its *Lehrerecke* is a collection of Weblinks that might be of interest to teachers. Harcourt adds a bulletin board for teachers.

Rather surprisingly, German textbooks are not yet common in these publishers' lists, falling a long way behind not only the obvious Spanish, but also ESL, French and Italian. Heinle & Heinle has no German sites, while Prentice Hall and Harcourt offer one each: *Treffpunkt*

<http://cw.prenhall.com/bookbind/pubbooks/widmaier/> and *Wie Geht's*
<http://www.harcourtcollege.com/german/sevin/>. Since all publish many more German textbooks than this, perhaps it is just a matter of time before more Websites are created. For example, Harcourt claims that there are Web resources available for *Deutsch im Berufsalltag*, but they are not accessible to all in the way that at least some of *Wie Geht's* materials are.

Metasites

Collections of resources have perhaps been the fastest growing area on the Web, with many sites including at least a limited collection of links that the developers have thought useful (the *Goethe Institut* <http://www.goethe.de/> is an example with categories like *Deutsch lernen und lehren*). As a result, enormous duplication is being generated. If there is a problem here, it is that it is relatively easy to build up comprehensive collections, but very difficult and time-consuming to create select collections that are well structured and well indexed.

Comprehensive collections include *The Language Hub: Worldwide resources for Languages* (164 languages) <http://www.cetrodftt.com/>, and the *Human Languages Page* (over 200 languages and over 1900 links) which has now been renamed *I love languages* <http://www.ilovelanguages.com/>.

Naturally, the larger the collection, the less user-friendly it risks becoming, and well structured single language sites might seem more helpful to users with limited time on their hands. Examples in French are the pioneering *Tennessee Bob's Famous French Links* <http://www.utm.edu/departments/french/french.html>, and *ClicNet* <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Humanities/clicnet/index.html>, while English is served by the *Internet TESL Journal: TESL Links* <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/links/>. However, with *TennesseeBob* claiming over 10000 links, *Clicnet* over 3000 and the *TESL Journal* over 6000, the structural problem has clearly not been overcome even in these more tightly focussed sites. Faced with such mountains of data, there is going to be a strong temptation to turn, instead, to sites that provide selections of links of varying sizes as part of their comprehensive menu of services. However, this does mean taking the quality of the

selection on trust - and not all sites might deserve that trust. To ask the critical question - is the selection a distillation of thousands of hours spent searching a much larger number of sites, or is it merely the result of chance encounters and recommendations from others?

Virtual Connections

Connecting students to authentic environments is getting easier and more user-friendly with threaded discussion groups becoming very popular, some of them now including sound (see *Wimba* above). Early Chats, MUSHES and MOOs tended to be very daunting text-based environments, but some pioneers got good results nevertheless (see Warschauer 1995, 1996). Strictly speaking, these developments used the Internet and predate the Web by a decade. Still, the boundary between the Web and the Internet is increasingly blurred, and, in any case, Websites now routinely include Chat and e-mail in what they offer. Both *Interdeutsch* and *Texthaus*, for example, rely heavily on communication of this sort.

Novices who want to familiarise themselves with the concept of a MOO are recommended to take the tour of *Romantic circles* <http://www.rc.umd.edu/rchs/>, which is a user-friendly site devoted to the study of Romantic literature and culture. For a German site, see *Morgengrauen* <http://mg.mud.de/online/>.

The environment has progressed tremendously in recent years with students being able to create their own three-dimensional characters through which to communicate as in *Active Worlds* <http://www.activeworlds.com/>. There are also now examples of entire collaborative courses run in several locations via *Active Worlds Educational Solutions* <http://www.activeworlds.com/edu/>. Only two German participants are listed - Fachhochschule Kaiserslautern Standort Zweibrücken, and Fachhochschule Esslingen, Hochschule für Socialwesen – but the list of educational institutions involved from around the world is already impressive.

One of the best examples of the use of the Active Worlds software is *Virtual Wedding* where students construct their own ‘city’ environments in the context of ‘marrying’ language, literature and culture. This is one of the most successful examples so far of involving students in collaborative work based on constructivist theory. An attractive touch

is provided by the video clips in which students describe the projects on the basis of their own experience.

Professional development

These sites exist for various professional purposes:

- Dissemination of information, exchanges of ideas and discussions, as in *WELL* <http://www.well.ac.uk/>, or *Tapped in* <http://www.tappedin.org/>.
- Training, as in *ICT4LT* <http://www.ict4lt.org/en/index.htm>.
- The provision of technical information as in *Language Interactive* <http://www.fln.vcu.edu/cgi/interact.html>.
- The provision of a shared teaching and learning space for teams of students and teachers as in *Thinkquest* <http://www.thinkquest.org/>.

As well as these, there are plenty of general sites which provide more or less complex services geared to teachers. For example, publishers' sites in particular often include a section for teachers.

Co-operative ventures

The Web lends itself perfectly to co-operative and collaborative activities. These may be confined to students enrolled in the course, with the final goal often being to publish the work produced online. One excellent example is *Project-driven Foreign Language Learning* <http://www.glen.hlc.unimelb.edu.au/glen/hll/>, which integrates multimedia tools into the projects and where students share the outcomes of their work with worldwide audiences by publishing on the Web. See also "*Österreichbilder*" *Ein StudentInnenprojekt, das verschiedene Fenster nach Österreich öffnet*

http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/german/austria_centre/student_project_2000_prelim/austria.htm/.

More widely, in one of the enriching examples of globalisation, co-operation can take place between students who might not only be enrolled in different institutions, but located in different countries. An example of an activity that brings students together in this way is *Odyssee - a Net game by e-mail* <http://www.goethe.de/oe/mos/odyssee/deindex.htm/>.

Another form of creative cooperation can be seen in the magazines on the Web, which are often included as one part of a comprehensive site. Some restrict themselves to publishing material for the users to read, others, like *Deutsch lernen mit Jetzt online* <http://www.goethe.de/z/jetzt> or *Pizzaz!* <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~leslieob/pizzaz.html> go further and provide an opportunity for the subscribers themselves to write material for posting on the site.

A more complex development is represented by *JarpTown* <http://elicos.qut.edu.au/village/default.htm/>. This is a creative writing experiment in which a group of ESL students have developed a variety of characters which then interact in a village environment built in the cyber community *Connections*. The results of these interactions are then turned into narrative writings and posted back on the Web. As the project progresses, the hope is that readers will be able to walk into the community and join in the narratives.

Children's sites

Materials for children have only started to appear systematically during the last two years. While they are specifically designed for younger audiences, they still offer a wealth of fun activities for learners of any age and provide rich sources of materials around which teachers can construct creative language learning activities. While levels of interaction vary, it is noticeable how strong an emphasis many of these sites place on getting children involved in a whole range of activities, including writing material that is posted on the site.

Not unexpectedly, many sites are now being devoted to popular books - and not only contemporary hits like Harry Potter but also the classics of Lewis Carroll, the creations of Dr Seuss <http://www.randomhouse.com/seussville> and C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* http://www.narnia.com/index_01.html. Many of these sites are fanzines, but there are official sites supported by the publishers that can be expected to have a commercial focus and to provide opportunities to buy. Similar ports of call for children who are already

reading the texts can be found in many languages, such as sites for *Astérix*, *Le Petit Prince* and *Tintin* in French.

The point of these sites is that they are directed explicitly to children. To take the obvious German example of Grimm's fairy tales, it is possible to find the texts themselves in the Gutenberg project <http://gutenberg.aol.de/index.htm/> but the site is not pitched at children. Similarly, children might enjoy the work that Robert Goodwin-Jones has done in building up a beautifully illustrated library of stories, in German and English translation, some with quizzes attached, <http://www.fln.vcu.edu/menu.html/>, but the site is meant for University students. There are also sites maintained by fans that are devoted to non-German subjects like Harry Potter, and that offer information, discussion groups, chats, quizzes, games and collections of links to other Potter sites. A useful entry to the field is <http://www.phoenixfeder.de/>.

For a German example of a publisher's site which offers a small number of activities for children in addition to the advertising material, see Egmont Franz Schneider Verlag <http://schneiderbuch.funonline.de/>.

Television and film provide the inspiration for other children's sites. The BBC has an extensive site *Littlekids* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/littlekids/>, as does the ABC, while Disney and Sesame Street are famous names with a Web presence.

A delightful aspect of many sites is their feel for children, as well as the beautiful colour graphics used. Perhaps understandably, it often feels that greater creative energy has gone into children's sites than into any other category. Excellent examples are *Die Blinde Kuh* <http://www.blinde-kuh.de/> and *Sowieso - Die on-line Zeitung für junger Leser* <http://www.sowieso.de/>, and the French sites *L'Escale* <http://www.lescale.net/> and *Premiers pas sur Internet, ou L'Internet pour enfants* <http://www.momes.net/>. At the most sophisticated end, ESL teachers might direct computer literate students to the amazing adventure-game oriented *Majestic* site <http://www.majestic.ea.com/>.

For a multi-lingual site that claims users in 137 countries from all around the world, and brings together a large number of mailing lists and real-time interactions like Chats, see *Kidlink* <http://www.kidlink.org/>. One of the 20 languages listed is German.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PEDAGOGY

Technology, ideas and implementations are changing too rapidly for it yet to be possible to provide a definitive picture of the pedagogy that underpins CALL on the Web. It is easy to see, though, whether individual developments have been driven by technicians, or by teachers, or by a team of instructional designers with expertise in IT, graphics and pedagogy.

Excellent things are being done, especially through synchronous and asynchronous forums like discussion groups, bulletin boards, Chats and MOOs. The Web provides wonderful potential for creative teachers to motivate students and keep them interested. Individual practitioners are using different combinations of approaches in a variety of ways. Included among these are hybrid approaches designed to avoid potential problems on the Web, which might take the form of downloading activities from the Web on to a self-contained Intranet, or of integrating CD-ROMs and the Web, or of running audio and video conferencing along with Web activities.

Pedagogical approaches adopted online vary greatly from traditional grammar-based teaching to innovative goal-oriented quests, with the former still dominant, if not as overwhelmingly as in the early years. A move towards constructivist approaches can be observed, and is explicitly present in, for example, *Euro Deutsch Online* (Pfeiffer 2001).

As a perhaps significant example of the change that is taking place, there are publishers' sites in which Webquests are the only form of activity supported for some of their textbooks. However, it can be difficult to determine what the overall teaching approach of any site is, since what is freely accessible on the Web is often only part of a larger package that also includes face-to-face teaching. More importantly, student interactions - with the materials, or each other, or the teacher - will never be visible to the casual visitor, even though these are critical to the pedagogical success of any site.

Nevertheless, while the Web is providing an increasingly rich shared free resource to CALL practitioners, the often alluded to 'radical rethinking' of the teaching approach still has a long way to go. The goal remains to use the Web for meaningful, realistic activities, to rethink the teaching approach, and to exploit the various communication resources available in the most motivating way possible.

CONCLUSION

What the survey of the Web makes clear is that a lot of excellent resources are available to support languages. It may not be true yet that we can simply log on to the Web to learn any language that we choose, or even the half dozen or so major languages. What is more, it may never be true, if only because learning a language in that isolated context is a very big challenge. All the same, the Web already offers a wide range of materials to support language learning, including learning in the classroom, along with a variety of models from which teachers will be able to profit when thinking about how they want to exploit what is there.

One problem with the material is duplication. This adds to the difficulty of identifying centres of excellence, but also represents a sad waste of scarce expertise and time. It would be much more sensible to embrace a co-operative model which would invest the scarce commodity of time in producing a range of materials that would complement each other. However, the fate of good advice is often to be ignored and the difficulties of getting people to work together - even within the same institution! - cannot be under-estimated. Apart from anything else, co-operation sits uneasily in a system characterised by competition, and the issue of copyright and intellectual property poses a threat that it would be unwise to ignore, however generous the spirit of co-operation has been so far.

It is unlikely, therefore, that the other big problem - how we can make an informed selection among everything that is on offer - will ever go away. Publishing a survey of sites is a first step towards developing a critical guide that will map the territory and save wasted hours of search time. However, since the Web is evolving so rapidly, with new sites appearing all the time and old ones occasionally disappearing, it might be thought that any such guide will date rapidly. That is true, but only partly so. Work that has been done on substantial sites that are on-going - and sites linked to University courses are unlikely to disappear overnight - will continue to be valid. All the same, an eye needs to be kept on them in case they change radically, and attention has to be paid to newcomers, so the material needs to be updated regularly if it is to continue to be useful. Finding the resources to do this useful work, on the other hand, will continue to be a challenge.

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Biodata

Professor Dr. Uschi Felix is Director of Information Technology Research and Development and a member of the German department in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University in Melbourne. She has a research background in applied linguistics, and during the last decade her work has focussed on CALL in all its various aspects, concentrating on the systematic integration into the curriculum of tested CALL applications from stand-alone software to WWW sites. She has contributed to the development of multi-media software and Websites in several languages. Her publications include many articles on the use of technology in language teaching as well as the book *Virtual Language Learning: Finding the Gems among the Pebbles*.

uschi.felix@arts.monash.edu.au