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Introduction to Computer Assisted Language Learning

CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is often considered a language teaching method, however, this is not really the case. In traditional CALL the methodology was often claimed to be based on a behaviouristic approach as in “programmable teaching” where the computer checked the student input and gave feedback (reward?) / moved on to an appropriate activity exercise. In modern CALL the emphasis is on communication and tasks.

The role of the computer in CALL has moved from the “input – control – feedback” sequence to management of communication, text, audio, and video. Few people may realise that a DVD player in reality is a computer. Future domestic appliances will integrate and merge video, television, audio, telephone, graphics, text, and Internet into one unit as can in 2006 be seen on newer generations of “mobile telephones / communicators”.



How do we use CALL for teaching e.g. the less widely used and taught languages? The starting point should not be that students sit at computers to learn a language. The starting point should rather be that students are learning a language and as part of that process sometimes sit at computers¹.

When planning to use CALL it is important to understand how a language is learned; language learning is a cognitive process, i.e. it is the result of the student’s own processing of language inputs. What is learned is mainly the result of this process and not just explanations, rules, and questions presented by a teacher or a computer. Based on his/her existing knowledge on the topic being worked on, language, and language acquisition the student processes the input and fits it into the language system he/she possesses. Language knowledge is not just recorded, but rather constructed by the student².

One of the worst fears when dealing with CALL and distance / online learning has always been the social aspect. It has been believed that the computer mediated community would imply some lack

¹ Hvad venter vi på? - om it i fremmedsprogundervisningen p. 15

² Hvad venter vi på? - om it i fremmedsprogundervisningen p. 44

of social relations. However, several presentations at EUROCALL3 conventions have revealed that distance learning classes using audio conferencing actually developed a strong sense of social community. (E.g. "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Teacher: The Role of Social Presence in the Online Classroom." by Tammelin Maija from the Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland and another presentation "Fostering (pro)active language learning through MOO" by Lesley Shield, Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom).

CALL offers the language teacher and learner a number of activities that when carefully planned as part of the pedagogical room will help the learner learn a language. The following pages present an alphabetically ordered list of sample activities.

eLearning courses for teachers

Responsible Mihai Braslasu

ECDL <http://www.ecdl.com/main/index.php> European Computer Driving Licence Foundation Ltd. (ECDL-F) website.

REPHRASE/collaborate on the text below (it has been taken from a website)

There are four areas within the ECDL-F range of certification programmes, from equalskills at entry-level to ECDL Specialised modules.

The core certification in the Foundation's product range is the ECDL/ICDL, the world's leading end-user computer skills certification programme.

The ECDL/ICDL Syllabus is unique in that it has been designed to be entirely vendor-neutral. This gives Candidates the flexibility and freedom to acquire core IT skills and confidently apply them in any software environment they choose.

ECDL-F is constantly expanding its range of certification programmes. ECDL-F has a programme to suit everyone. From Equalskills and e-Citizen at Foundational level, to ECDL Advanced and the following specialised products: ECDL for Computer Aided Design (ECDL CAD) and ECDL Certified Training Professional (ECDL CTP).

Launching soon will be ECDL WebStarter and ECDL ImageMaker.

More detailed information about all of the programmes in the ECDL-F Product range is available in the map provided.

Find out more about ECDL for People with Disabilities (ECDL PD)

The ECDL is designed to be inclusive. Find out more: ECDL - About Inclusiveness

Types of call related materials / activities

Adventure games.

³ <http://www.eurocall-languages.org/> a European language teachers' organisation dealing with ICT and language teaching

Adventure games are computer managed role plays where the user is presented with a situation that he/she has to deal with. The user has to choose what to do and input the result as text, speech (speech recognition software), or by clicking on options. Based on the input the program branches to resulting situations / gives feed-back.

Adventure games can be very entertaining when constructed for language learners, unfortunately only very few have been designed for the less taught languages. An entertaining Portuguese example, Uma Aventura na União Europeia, by Mrs Teresa Pacheco, a teacher in the ESES - Escola Superior de Educação de Santarém can be found here: <http://nonio.eses.pt/asp/europa/index.htm>

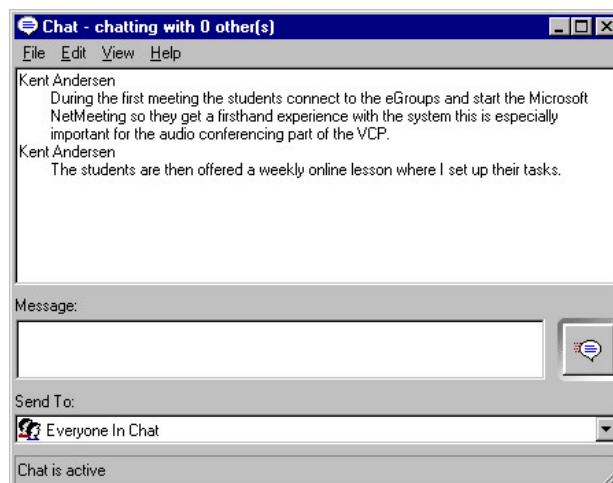
If you want to create your own adventure games we suggest you try the Quandary software which is shareware: <http://www.halfbakedsoftware.com/>

Blogs (weB LOGS)

Responsible Klaus Leonhardt

Chat online

Chat centres can be a rewarding experience for the language learner. The user meets other learners online and can communicate with these through text or speech. It is easy to set up a chat server, but difficult to gain users, it is a very lonely feeling to be the only visitor in a chat room;-) The main problems with chats are the lack of content and difficulties in organising and arranging chats using the less taught languages. However, when combined with tasks and suitable groups of students (age groups, interests etc.) chats can lead to real communication and when followed by post task work - language learning.



Cloze exercises.

Cloze exercises are similar to the fill-in the blank exercise. This is an activity that can easily and in a few minutes be created with the software “Hot Potatoes”⁴.

Commenting / correcting electronic texts / essays/ exercises.

When a student has handed in a text in an electronic form it is bad practice just to print it out and to comment on it with the old fashioned red ink. It works much better when the teacher inserts suggestions in the text using the word processor or dedicated programs to do so. An example of a program for commenting texts can be found at <http://www.cict.co.uk/software/markin/index.htm> the program can be adapted to different languages.

Cross Words

Cross words are often very popular with students, and when created from the vocabulary that the students have just been working on it is a good tool for post task exercises. This is an activity that can easily and in a few minutes be created with the software “Hot Potatoes”⁵. And with Hot Potatoes students may even create the exercises for one another.

Drills

Drills are often referred to as “Drill and Kill” exercises. A computer can do anything that the old fashioned language laboratories could do; Model: “He has one car”, Response “No, he has two cars”. “He has one computer”, “No, he has two computers” ... The user input can be either text or speech through the computer microphone.

Electronic dictionaries

Electronic dictionaries are very useful for the learners of the less taught languages. Through the Internet there are several examples of dictionaries that are either free or shareware. Try the address <http://www.dictionaries.com>

Electronic Portfolios.

An electronic portfolio can be a simple collection of work on a diskette or in the more advanced version a student website where the student presents selected pieces of work. Some of the work may still be in progress thus demonstrating the learning process. The pedagogical idea is that the student becomes aware of his/her learning styles, this helps the student choose the right activities thus increasing learning. Portfolios can also be used for assessing students. Read an article by TIM Caudery on portfolio assessment here: <http://www.dpb.dpu.dk/infodok/sprogforum/Espr11/caudery.html>

⁴ A software which is free when used for online exercises: www.halfbaked.com

⁵ A software which is free when used for online exercises: www.halfbaked.com

Fill-in the blank.

The user works with a text where some of the words are missing, the user has to find suitable words to solve the exercise. This is an activity that can easily and in a few minutes be created with the software “Hot Potatoes”⁶.

Find the answers.

The student is given a question and looks for the answer in documents, video, or audio using the Internet, CD-ROM, DVD or similar storage. The answers can then be presented to the teacher / class in different forms.

Find the right sequence (or jumbled sentences).

In this activity a sentence or a story is cut into pieces that the user has to reorder to reconstruct the sentence or the story. This is an activity that can easily be created with the software “Hot Potatoes”.

Grammar.

There are only few grammar programs for the less taught languages and often they are only transferring book style exercises to a computer with similar lack of success. However, there is at present one recommendable grammar website: The VISL site <http://visl.hum.sdu.dk/visl/> VISL stands for "Visual Interactive Syntax Learning", it is a research and development project at the Institute of Language and Communication (ISK), University of Southern Denmark (SDU) - Odense Campus. Since September 1996, staff and students at ISK have been designing and implementing Internet-based grammar tools for education and research.

At the start of the project, four languages were involved: English, French, German, and Portuguese. Since then, many additional languages have joined the project - as evidenced by the growing number of entries in the language list.

From the VISL site the following "tools" are available for you:

Grammatical Analyses (pre-analyzed sentences and automatic machine parsing)
Games & Quizzes (testing of word classes and other grammatical topics)
Corpus Search (access to the BNC and other language corpora)
Machine Translation

If you access one of the VISL languages through the entry page, you will be asked the question "Which VISL tool do you want to use?". Within each language you will find various options available to you. In the table below, we have provided an overview of what is currently available for each language.

⁶ A software which is free when used for online exercises: www.halfbaked.com



	VISL Tools					
Languages	Pre-analyzed sentences	Automatic analyses	Games	Quizzes	Corpus Search	Machine Translation
Arabic	X	-	-	-	-	-
Bosnian	X	-	X	-	-	-
Danish	X	X	X	-	X	X
Dutch	X	-	-	-	-	-
English	X	X	X	X	X	-
Esperanto	X	X	X	-	-	-
Finnish	X	-	X	-	-	-
French	X	X	X	-	-	-
German	X	X	X	-	X	-
Greek (Anc)	X	-	X	-	-	-
Greek (Mod)	X	-	X	-	-	-
Italian	X	X	X	-	-	-
Japanese	X	-	-	-	-	-
Japanese Roman-ji	X	-	X	-	-	-
Latin	X	-	X	-	-	-
Latvian	X	-	X	-	-	-
Norwegian (bok)	X	-	X	-	-	-
Norwegian (Ny)	X	-	-	-	-	-
Portuguese	X	X	X	-	X	X
Russian	X	-	-	-	-	-
Spanish	X	X	X	-	X	-
Swedish	X	-	X	-	-	-

Hotwords.

This is not really an exercise or activity, but still very useful for the language learner. In a text important words and cultural notes can be linked to suitable explanations and translations. Hotwords can be made with most word processors.

Listening exercises.

In this activity the computer replaces a tape recorder. Often the activity is combined with other activities like multiple choice exercises to control if the student has understood the content.

Matching words, sentences, or pictures

This activity can be very useful for several purposes even for vocabulary training where a student drags words to corresponding pictures. This activity can easily and in a few minutes be created with the software “Hot Potatoes”⁷.

Multiple Choice.

This type of exercise is very useful for a quick control of a student’s understanding the content of information given through audio, text, video etc. This is an activity that can easily be created with the software “Hot Potatoes”.

Podcasts

Responsible Sean Mean

Role plays / MUD and MOO.

On the Internet it is possible to take part in role plays with participants from all over the world. The activity is often called MUD; Multi User Dungeons. In some cases the activities have been made explicitly for language teaching and class room use, try these two addresses: <http://moo.du.org> and www.du.org

Examples of MUDs for different languages can be found at these addresses:
<http://moolist.yeehaw.com/edu.html> and
<http://home.gno-fn.org/whs1/education/subjects/langmoos.html>

Simulations.

Electronic or online simulations are different from role plays because the activities undertaken in a simulation are real and not just acting. The tools for electronic simulations can be plain e-mails, mobile phone SMS, chat boards etc. The advantage of an electronic simulation is the possibility of having participants from different countries. The disadvantage in advanced simulations is the high level of computer skills that is often involved.

⁷ A software which is free when used for online exercises: www.halfbaked.com

An example: Strike is an example of a simulation suitable for intermediate or advanced students. In the Strike simulation the students have individual “roles”. The simulation takes place at ADAMENT (a machine works) where a clash of opinions causes a strike.

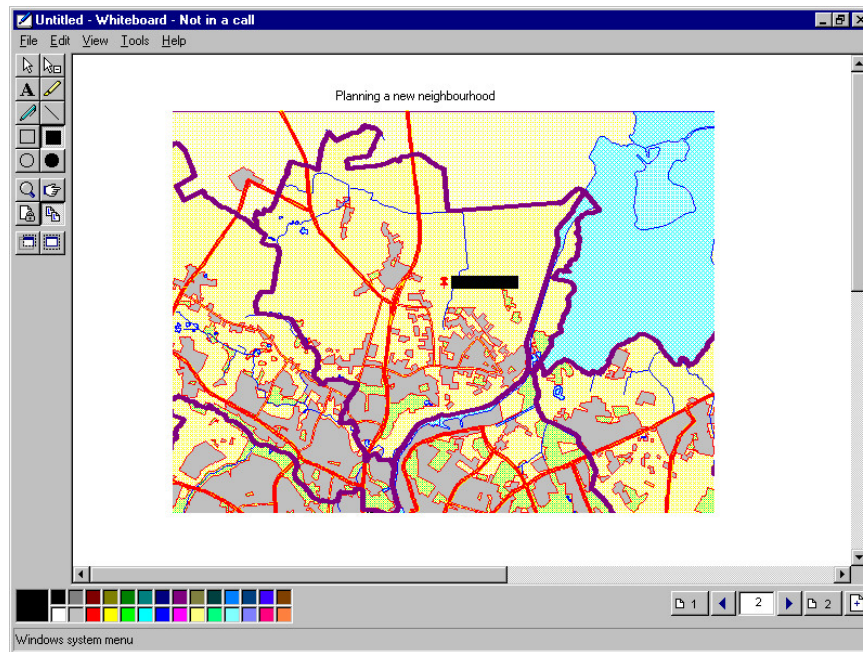
The scenario is: One of the electricians who is always late for work is sacked after an argument with the foreman. The shop steward summons a meeting where the employees decide to strike. They claim the machine works is a nineteenth century sweatshop with a very bad working environment.



They also claim the electrician has been victimised by the foreman due to the many conflicts in the machine works. None of the parties seems willing to budge an inch, however, ADAMENT is pressed by one of the customers who is in urgent need of a specific supply. The customer threatens to take the order elsewhere ...

The students are placed in two main groups according to their roles. Group one - Employer, managers, foreman etc. Group B - The shop steward, the electrician, different workers. Each group can meet online to prepare for meetings between the two groups. The teacher’s / organizer’s role is to ensure that the simulation stays "alive", i.e. if needed he/she can send the managers an e-mail from their costumer, or send the employees an e-mail from the trade union stating that the strike is illegal and must come to an end. The simulation is finished when the two parts come to an agreement.

Town Planning: Another online simulation is called Town Planning. In this simulation the class is divided into two groups. The students in group A are town planners who have the task to prepare a suggestion for building a new neighbourhood at the Odense Fjord. Group B are ecologists who prefer the area preserved as a natural reserve, however, they have to accept that there is a need for a new neighbourhood. Each group have their own online sessions with the teacher where they start preparing their suggestions to the other group. When ready they invite the other group to an online conference, during that conference (which probably will be a number of conferences) the students negotiate and give suggestions using both online audio and an electronic whiteboard system (part of the free Microsoft NetMeeting).



Tandem.

The best way of learning a foreign language is communication with a native speaker who wants to learn your language. It is a give and take solution where you are the teacher (of your own language) AND the student (of a foreign language). Help and tips on how to learn as a tandem partner can be found here: <http://www2.tcd.ie/CLCS/tandem/email/help/helpeng01.html>

E-mail tandems differ from face to face tandems (or online audio tandems like Netmeeting) because an e-mail tandem has to concentrate on written communication skills. Read about e-mail tandems at this address: <http://www.dpb.dpu.dk/infodok/sprogforum/Espr13/pors.html>

Task based learning

Task based learning can easily benefit from online resources. Read a quick introduction to task based learning in Michael Svendsen Pedersen's article "What does you have in your "Task" today?" <http://www.dpb.dpu.dk/infodok/sprogforum/Espr4/msp.html>

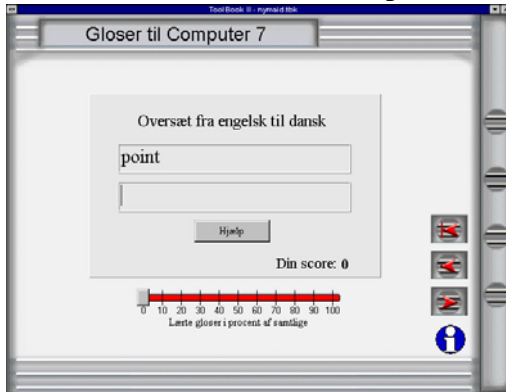
Another interesting article (in English) from Sprogforum on task-based learning which is the result of an in-service course for language teachers who teach adult immigrants and refugees Danish at the country's language centres can be found here:
http://www.dpb.dpu.dk/infodok/sprogforum/Espr_nr20.html

Vodcast

Responsible Sean Mean

Vocabulary training.

This is one of the oldest exercise types for computers. The computer asks a word and the student has to answer with a correct response. The student input can be through text or speech. This



exercise type can be very fruitful, but only when the words trained are placed in a context. It can be very useful if the student can choose words he/she wants to train and build up his/her own exercises, this way the student creates a personal vocabulary portfolio. An advanced vocabulary training program (for Windows based computers) suitable for making personal vocabulary portfolios can be downloaded for free here: www.languages.dk/methods/voc The program has an editor for building new exercises.

Voicemail

Responsible Bogdan Georgescu

Webcams

Responsible Bogdan Georgescu

WebQuests.

A WebQuest is an activity where the student answers questions / compiles information mostly found on the web. WebQuests are designed to focus on using and analysing information rather than looking for it. This means the teacher / constructor provides the student with the needed links.

The best place on the web to learn about WebQuests is: <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/webquest.html>

The WebQuest model was developed in early 1995 at San Diego State University by Bernie Dodge with Tom March, and was outlined then in Some Thoughts About WebQuests.

The main problems using the WebQuest method for the less taught languages are the language level of the websites (usually very high) and also for some of the languages there is still (2003) only little content available on the web.

How to transfer analogue materials to digital materials (e.g. tape to DVD)

Copyrights

Responsible Kent Andersen

Cassette tape to CD

Responsible Kent Andersen

Cassette tape to MP3

Responsible Kent Andersen

VHS to DVD

Responsible Kent Andersen

VHS to files suitable for websites e.g. mv files

Responsible Kent Andersen

Recording Multi Media

Audio files

Responsible Martainn Domhnallach

Video files

Responsible Martainn Domhnallach

Students with special needs

Deaf students

Responsible Ursula Wrobel

http://ui4all.ics.forth.gr/workshop2004/files/ui4all_proceedings/adjunct/interactive_applications/77.pdf

<http://www.ecdl.com/main/ecdlpd.php>

http://ecdl-pd.aib.uni-linz.ac.at/What_ECDLPD_is.html

Subtitling for deaf students (sounds etc.)

Visually impaired students

Responsible Hans Bruin

<http://www.uni.edu/ada/bobby/>

<http://www.ecdl.com/main/ecdlpd.php>

http://ecdl-pd.aib.uni-linz.ac.at/What_ECDLPD_is.html

Voice over in videos with additional information e.g. the man left the room + general descriptions

How to make your own CALL exercises.

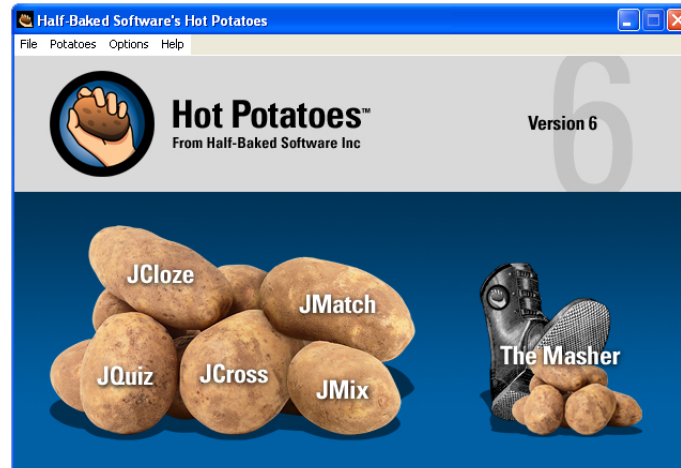
If you know how to use a word processor and know how to store your work in different places on your hard disk or even better on the net then you have all the basics needed for making CALL exercises.

There are many authoring systems offering an easy way to create exercises, however, many of these are complicated to learn and to use (despite what is promised on the cover!). Many authoring systems are expensive and some even ask a license fee for each end user. But do not despair; there is also free software which is easy to use. We recommend you to try out the free⁸ software called Hot Potatoes, made by “Half Baked Software”. You can download “Hot Potatoes” from <http://www.halfbakedsoftware.com> or visit the Hot Potatoes homepage: <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/>

When you have installed the program you should register, this is free, after registration you receive a password which is needed when you start making your exercises.

The Hot Potatoes suite offers a wide range of exercises. From the welcome screen you click on the type you want:

⁸ Free, but only if the exercises you make are placed on the Internet without any charge from the end user



The best way to learn to use Hot Potatoes is to work through the on-line Tutorial provided with the program, by doing so you actually work your way through the different types of exercises you can make with the program.

Hot Potatoes can be adapted / translated into any language so all instructions and feed-backs are given in the target language.

If you want to try what other teachers have created using Hot Potatoes you can visit this web address: <http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/hotpot/sites6.htm> where you can work with many different languages like Arabic, English, Finnish, French, English, Galician, Latin, Indonesian, Italian, Jersey, German, Italian, Maori, Portuguese, Salish, Spanish, and Swedish.

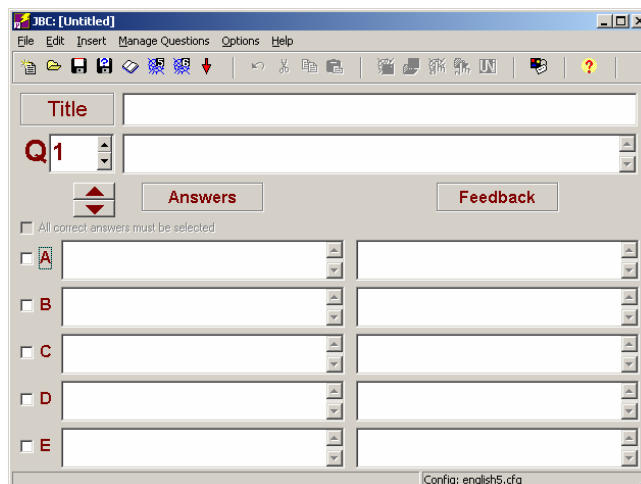
An example of the resources available from these links are “Video on Demand Resources” from the Ashcombe School, UK :

http://www.ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk/Curriculum/modlang/shared/vod_sp.htm The site offered in mid 2006 for free a total of 35 French Videos, 23 German Videos, 16 Spanish Videos, and 8 Italian Videos. Each video is accompanied with exercises made in Hot Potatoes. The video cover topics like: Self, Family & Friends, Leisure/Entertainment, Free Time, Pocket Money, Local Environment, My house and home, Home and Home Life, Daily Routine, Education, School subjects, Travel and Transport, Holidays and Tourism, Food and Drink, Shopping & Services, Healthy Living, Healthy lifestyle, Work, and Career & Plans

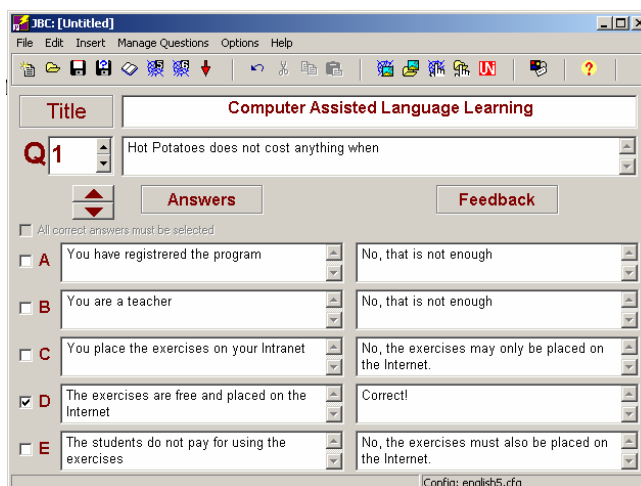
Below you find a very simple walk through of the exercise types that you can create with Hot Potatoes

A multiple choice quiz

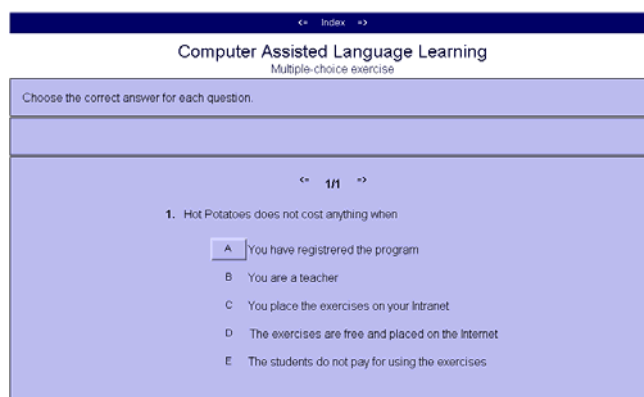
JBC is for making a multiple choice quiz. In the quiz you can make as many questions you want, each with up to five optional answers.



You simply type in a number of choices, for each choice you have to choose a feedback and decide if it is correct, if more than one answer is correct you can decide that the student must click on all correct answers.

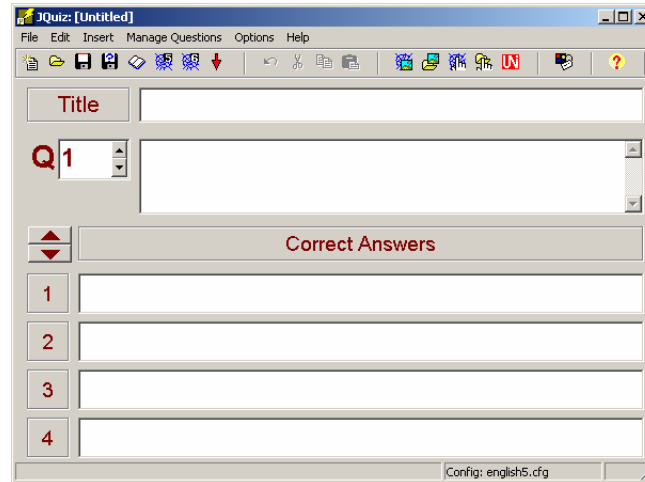


The resulting exercises look like this:



A Quiz program

JQuiz is the Quiz program which lets you ask questions and provide answers. It is more demanding on you because you must imagine all the possible correct answers that a student could write otherwise the student may be told that a correct answer is wrong!



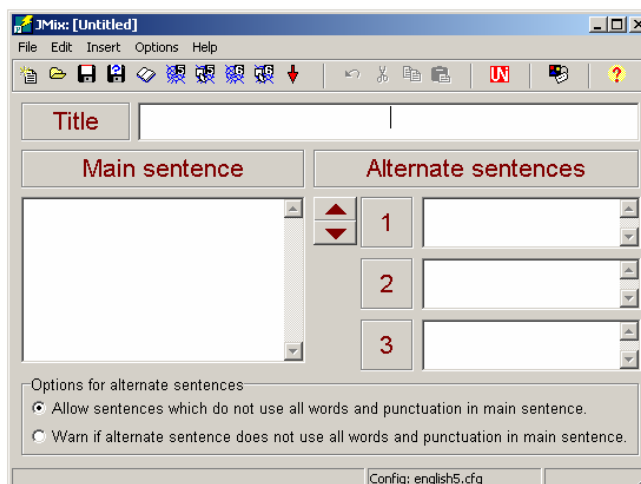
After having given the exercise a title and asked the question you simply fill in up to four possible correct answers. The generated result looks like this:



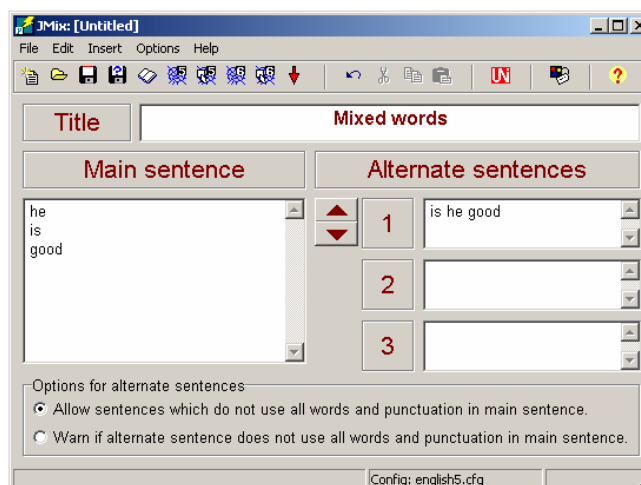
The student can ask for a hint and will then be given the next correct letter.

Jumbled sentence exercises

JMix is for making Jumbled sentence exercises that are very good for language beginners. The student is presented with a number of words that he/she will have to place in a correct sequence.



To make an exercise you have to type in a sentence in the “Main sentence” window, but with the “Main sentence” you must press Enter after each word. You may also create alternative correct sentences, e.g. the words “he is good” should also be accepted as “is he good”.



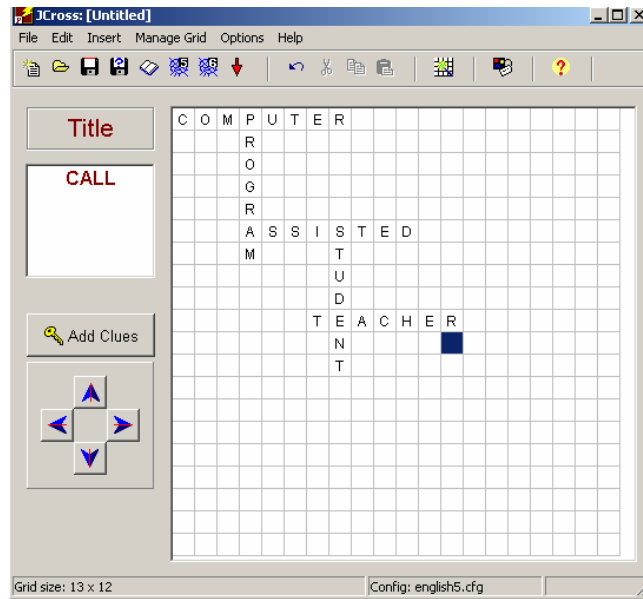
The resulting exercise may look like this:



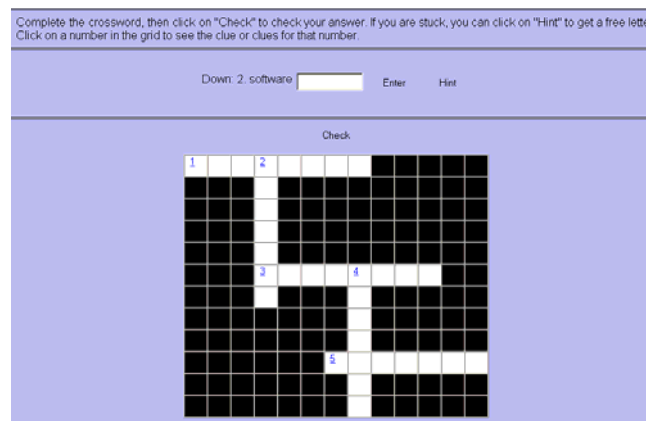
The user drags the words and places them in the correct sequence.

Cross word exercise

JCross is for making a cross word exercise which is a very rewarding exercise for beginners. It is also a very easy exercise to construct when using Hot Potatoes. You simply type in the words as you want them, and after that you add the clues.



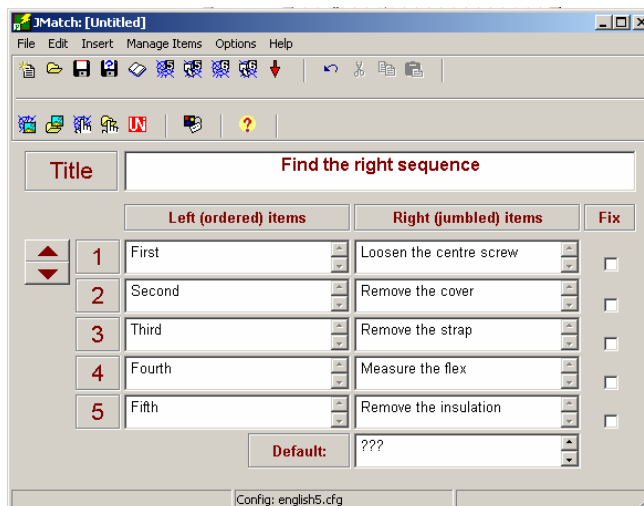
The result of two minutes work may look like this:



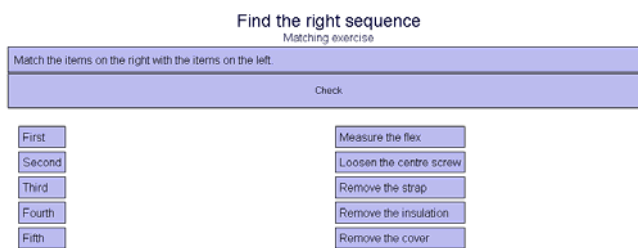
Matching exercise (Drag and drop)

JMatch is the matching exercise type which is another very good exercise for all levels of students. You can have up to five items with matching items. Items can be words OR pictures, this mean you can easily create a picture based vocabulary trainer!

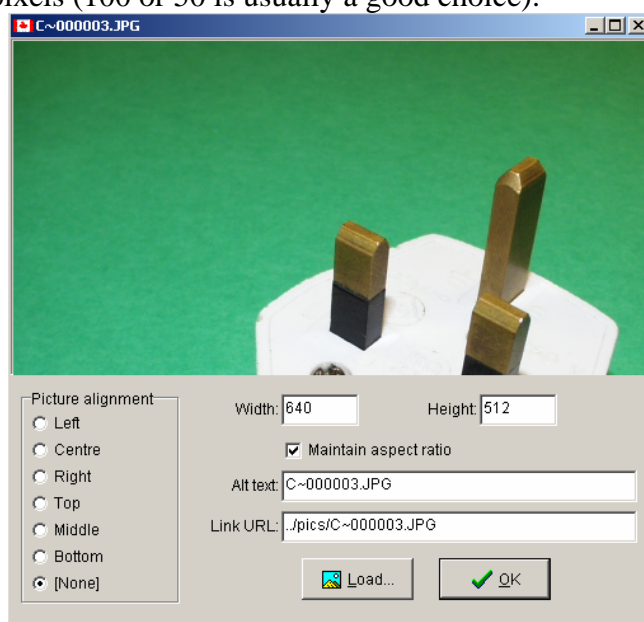
In this example we have taken a sequence of five instructions from how to wire an electric plug



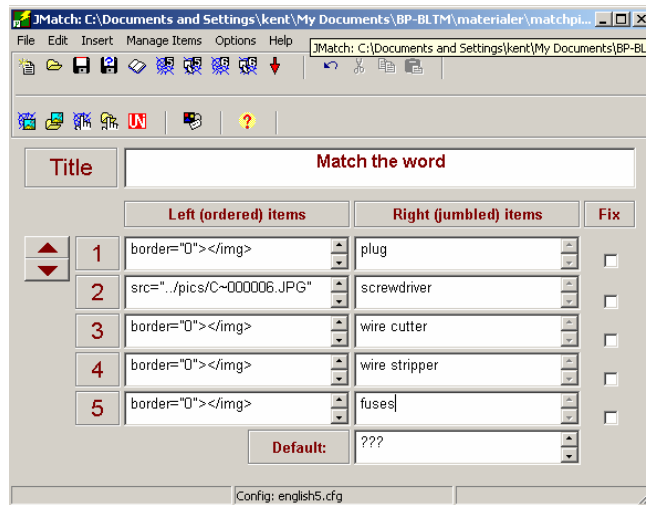
The student will be presented with the five items and will then have to drag the matching items to the correct places:



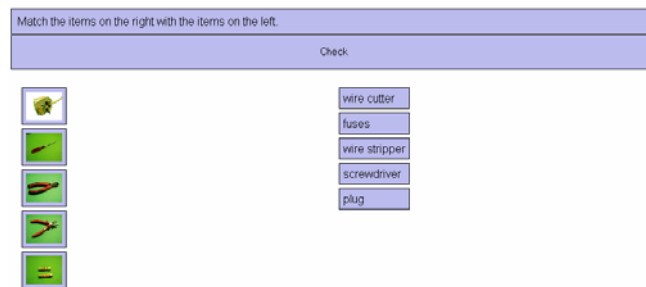
To insert pictures is a little more difficult. First you need to have the pictures ready in the same folder as the resulting exercises, next you need to insert them instead of text, to do so you select Insert in the top menu and then select "Picture from local file". You then choose the picture, after choosing a picture you need to decide the size of the picture, it should be the same size for all pictures, e.g. Width 50 pixels (100 or 50 is usually a good choice):



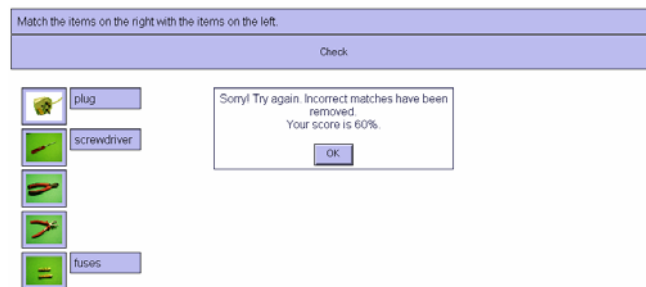
The program then automatically creates the needed html code and puts it in the item box:



The resulting exercise may look like this:

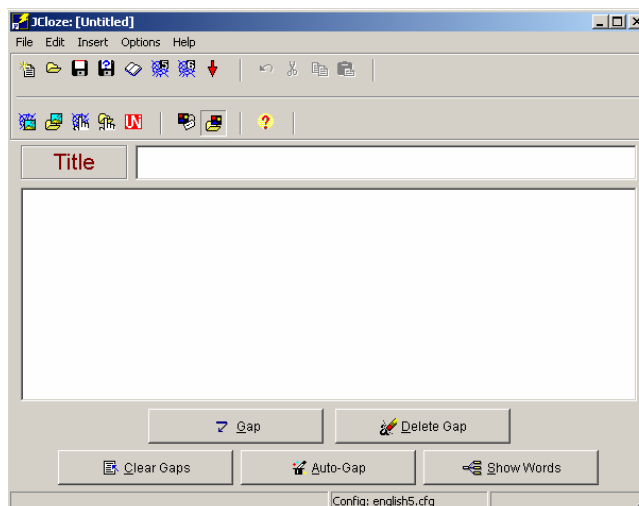


The student has to drag the text to the correct picture. In this example the student has made some errors:

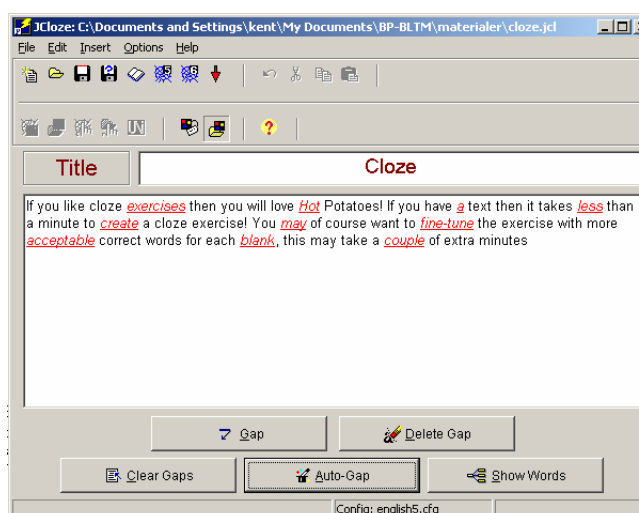


Fill in the blank or Cloze exercise

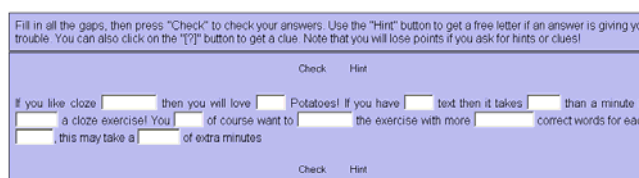
JCloze is for Cloze exercises: If you like cloze exercises then you will love Hot Potatoes! If you have a text then it takes less than a minute to create a cloze exercise! You may of course want to fine-tune the exercise with more acceptable correct words for each blank, this may take a couple of extra minutes...



First you give your exercise a title and then you are ready for pasting in the text, when you have done that click on “Clear Gaps” this is needed to remove hidden information produced by some word processors. Now all you have to do is click on “Auto-Gap” and choose e.g. to remove every fifth word.



After 30 seconds work from the teacher the students can “enjoy” many minutes work:



How to make your own paper based exercises

There are several tools available for the teacher who wants to produce paper based exercises, e.g. many of the online exercise types produced with Hot Potatoes also have the option of print out (e.g. the cross words).

Another suite of exercises can be found at <http://www.thelanguagemenu.com> Several of the tools found there can be used for free, there is also a free trial week in case you want to have a feel of the advanced facilities / tools

Some example outputs from the Web Project

<http://www.thelanguagemenu.com>

Board game generator

Choose between 3 sizes, add pictures from the clipart gallery or write your own texts, questions or grammar exercises, and let your students work on their grammar or vocabulary through playing a game. You can also make up your own flash card questions for the board games with the flash-card generator, laminate and use together.

The Bingo maker has 3 possibilities, make your bingo boards with pictures, mix pictures and words or just use words, and choose your bingo board size according to your own needs. Our clipart gallery gives you hundreds of possibilities for this tool. Choose or randomise. Just create, generate a pdf-file and print. With the refresh button you can change the pictures in seconds.

Crossword maker

Create two types of crosswords in no time. Crossword puzzles are an easy way to practice vocabulary. Use the vocabulary from our clipart gallery to create bilingual crosswords in a several categories.

Word search

Just enter the words you wish to have hidden, with or without clues. The tool creates a worksheet with answers quickly and ready to print. Use it with the multilingual clipart gallery.

Fill in the blank

Create your own worksheets. In a hurry? Use our database with hundreds of sentences to choose from.

Make your own flashcards

Just add a sentence you wish to have on the flashcard, generate a pdf document and print. For longer lasting material to be reused, laminate the cards. Use this tool to make up discussion themes

for your class, bilingual word drills or informative cards. You may also choose a picture from the clip-art card gallery and add your own text next to the picture, and print.

Label the pictures

It works with pictures, with or without hints and/or answers. Perfect for bilingual use as well. Just choose the native language and let the students write the vocabulary in the target language.

Matching exercise generator

Use the generator to make up your own worksheets with pictures, add your own text or just a word for your students to match the picture with the text.

Multiple choice

Make your multiple choices worksheet quickly with the worksheet generator. Write your question and give some alternatives and create a pdf document. It only takes a minute. Use for vocabulary drills, bilingual exercises, explanations, maths, questions and answers worksheets etc.

Missing words

Add a text to the missing words generator, choose the interval of the words to be missing, decide on the fontsize and print your pdf file and the worksheet is ready to use. Now you have a text with missing words and a small word bank to choose the right word from.

Split words

Split the words in two, let your students put them together, with or without hints. Excellent to practice suffixes and prefixes with, or just to work on vocabulary. Write the word in two parts, add a hint if you wish, and print your pdf file. Easy to make.

Framework

Choose this tool when you want your students to fill in words in the framework, pictures or words chosen from our clipart gallery write the words yourself. Can also be used for bilingual students to translate the "hint" words. Choose between the normal setting or black background. You may also print answers.

Scrambled sentences

Write a sentence and print a pdf document. The generator scrambles the sentence and you have a ready work sheet for your students to practice word order with. Easy as one, two, three.

Word spiral

The word spiral works in the same way as the crossword, but the program generates the squares in a spiral. You may also make up a spiral that has the first and last letter intertwined. A tool for bilingual use as well.

Lined

A tool to make written exercises for your students. Use your own words, choose words or pictures from our clipart gallery and ask your students to explain what these items are used for, how to use them, write a sentence about the word, add synonyms for the word. Quick and easy for all levels.

To experience the resources above go to: <http://www.thelanguagemenu.com>

Computer Assisted Language Learning within the framework of Task Based Learning.

In addition to the other chapter on Task Based Learning (TBL), which describes a learning sequence based primarily on the ideology of TBL, we find that the method of TBL could be further developed and that sequences of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) could add another dimension to the TBL method. Here, our aim is to try to set up a learning sequence where multimedia tasks are built into the framework of TBL. But first a few words about the theory behind it.

Why Task Based Learning?

The TBL methodology has gained many devoted supporters within the last decade. The methodology can be described as a complete change of paradigm within the world of language teaching, a change away from the behaviouristic PPP paradigm (present, practice and produce) and into a learner centred approach- the TBL paradigm. In the PPP method the aim is to present a certain form or structure, make the learners practice this form and afterwards produce a number of sentences within the specific form. With this approach language teaching first of all becomes a very closed and rigid process, where the teacher is constantly in control of what the learners work with, do and say. Here the teacher works within a framework where answers from learners are ruled incorrect or correct in relation to the taught form. I.e. if the answers from learners do not match the taught form, which was presented by the teacher, the answers will be listed as incorrect, despite the fact that the answer was a correct English sentence, only not using the right form or word.

Now you might ask yourself why it is important to know about the PPP method. By comparing the two methods, we can emphasize the many advantages of TBL. Basically, it is a question of belief and if you believe in TBL, you believe in the idea that language learning is a natural and uncontrollable process. Peter Skehan, who teaches on the MA and MPhil/PhD programmes at Thames Valley University, London, says this:

Teaching does not and cannot determine the way the learner's language will develop. The processes by which the learner operates are "natural" processes. Teachers and learners cannot simply 'choose' what is to be learned. To a large extent the syllabus is 'built in' to the learner.⁹

Many books and articles have been written about both TBL and the PPP method. Here is what Michael Lewis, author of several source books, says about the PPP method:

A paradigm based on, or remotely resembling, Present-Practice-Produce (PPP) is wholly unsatisfactory, failing as it does to reflect either the nature of language or the nature of learning.

⁹ Jane and Dave Willis, eds. , Challenge and Change in Language Teaching (Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1998), p. 19

The fact is the PPP paradigm is, and always was, nonsense.¹⁰

There are many other arguments from different scholars and language teachers against the use of the PPP method. Some of the most striking ones are arguments like the following from Peter Skehan, who says

the PPP method enables the teacher to orchestrate classroom behaviour, ie to use a maintaining authority, ie by using the bundled techniques to show to students exactly who is in charge.

a belief that learners will learn what is taught in the order in which it is taught¹¹

PPP has served to perpetuate a comfortable position for teachers and for teacher trainers³

Another reason for keeping the PPP method in mind, is that the method probably has been the most globally used language teaching methodology within the last fifty years; and it is still used by many language teachers and text book writers.

But let us have a look at some of the arguments in favour of TBL. As the name of the method indicates, the methodology is based on learning language by the use of different tasks in order to bring life, spontaneity and individuality into the classroom – in short learning by doing. The aim with the TBL method is that each learner, by working with different tasks and primarily with other learners, goes through an individual internal learning process. The most important job for the teacher is to supply the teaching material, the tasks and to help build up a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

A TBL sequence could for example be based on building up a timetable, a timetable for a week.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Midday					
Afternoon					
Evening					

¹⁰ Jane and Dave Willis, eds. , Challenge and Change in Language Teaching (Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1998), p. 17

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 17

Introductory tasks, written and oral ones, could easily be made, introducing names of days, day times, specific expressions, etc. etc. The introductory tasks will give the learner a basis of words and expressions to use as he or she pleases before moving on to other tasks. In this case, the introductory tasks could be followed by a task where the learner must fill in the timetable according to his or her own life. This personal timetable will then form the basis of an oral task, where two learners ask each other questions in relation to the timetables. For example: “what do you do on Tuesday afternoon” and so on.

The teacher is not supposed to interfere in the communication between two learners in a task, unless they ask or a natural opening for teacher commentary occurs. The teacher must listen and observe and wait with language commentaries and focus points until all learners in the classroom have worked through the tasks. This is a very important phase. Here the teacher must be the catalyst for a language focus process, with the aim to make the learners aware of and conscious of their own learning abilities as well as different language complexities – a consciousness raising or clarification process based on the different observations and questions from all learners. Clearly, this leaves the teacher in a completely new role, where he or she cannot plan a language teaching sequence beforehand. Here is what Michael Lewis says about language teaching and TBL:

Language is successfully acquired only when it is available for spontaneous, personal use with other people¹²

The teacher helps students make explicit their perceptions of similarity and differencehelps them to correct, clarify and deepen those perceptions¹³

The teacher’s primary role is the selection of materials and tasks and the creation of an appropriate atmosphere¹⁴

It is very important not to forget or skip the consciousness raising process, a process which should lie at the end of either every task or a full task sequence. It is here that the learner can ask questions or make different observations in relation to the work with the tasks. It is here that the teacher must help students to reflect on their own work with the language, which the individual learner used in the tasks. The teacher must monitor and correct language mistakes and direct attention towards language complexities. The most important thing to remember at this point is that the clarification process must be based on the observations and reflections made by the learners.

Another important job for the teacher, if he or she wants the tasks to work well, is to properly describe how a task is meant to work. If this is not done with enough focus and detail, there might be learners who will spend more energy on figuring out how the task is meant to work,

¹² Jane and Dave Willis, eds., Challenge and Change in Language Teaching (Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1998), p. 13

¹³ *ibid* p.15

¹⁴ *ibid* p. 15

rather than on the language learning activity itself. This is especially the case with beginners or learners who are not familiar with the TBL method.

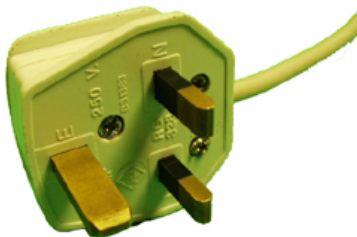
It is not difficult to use TBL with learners on a beginner's level, however, one must be aware that it is necessary to give beginners many examples of the new language, in different media, including text, sound and pictures, as long as the examples are always understandable. Crucially, the tasks must not be overcomplicated and they must be simple in structure. In addition, the tasks should focus on things and topics which are familiar and recognisable to the new learners. Jane Willis has made a handy list of priorities for the teacher. The priorities are as follows:

- establishing a relaxed, anxiety-free atmosphere in the classroom;
- providing a lot of exposure that learners can make approximate sense of;
- building on what they know, but without expecting perfection;
- not forcing them to speak at first if they prefer not to;
- reassuring them of their progress, and generally boosting their confidence.¹⁵

Jane Willis has written a book of her own about Task Based Learning and she operates with terms like “pre-task, task cycle and language focus”.¹⁶ In the chapter about Task Based Learning the Jane Willis model is described in full detail.

In the following example we will present a learning sequence where we try to integrate the ideas of TBL with the ideas of CALL. The CALL exercises will function as introductory tasks, which aim to build up a vocabulary for the following oral and written tasks.

A task based example “The Wired Plug”



In this lesson Computer Assisted Language Learning is used to give students a vocabulary based on technical phrases, and the students will learn about instructions. Important skills in vocational training include being able to give and receive instructions.. The following

¹⁵ Jane Willis, A Framework for Task-Based Learning (Malaysia: Longman, 2000), p. 118

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 52

outlined lesson can be used for most students disregarding their specialities because many of the instructions can be used in different crafts.

The electronic lesson materials support two levels, elementary and intermediate. By using the multimedia materials it is possible to have different learner levels in the same class.

List of materials:

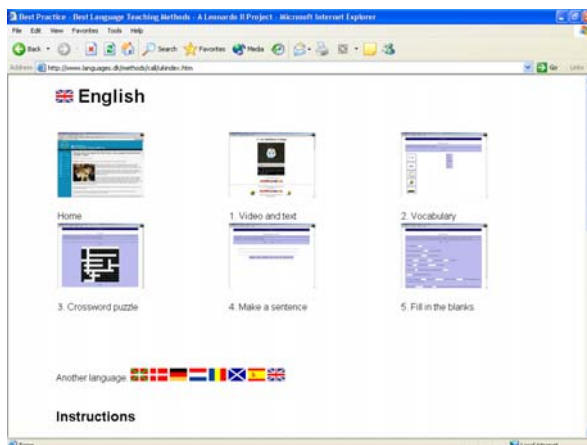
- a. Electric plugs; it is best if British plugs are available because these are more “complicated”, but other plugs may be used.
- b. Flexible wire
- c. Screwdrivers
- d. Wire cutters
- e. Wire strippers (but wire cutters can be used if these are not available)

Lesson outline

1. The students are introduced to the CALL materials, in this case a web based application with video and text, followed by exercises. Additionally, a supporting translation of lesson words and phrases is available. <http://www.languages.dk/methods/call/index.htm>



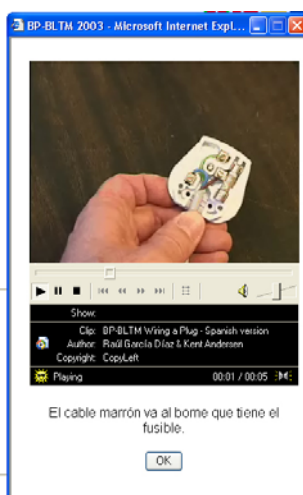
2. The students work through the web based multimedia material through doing the following activities:



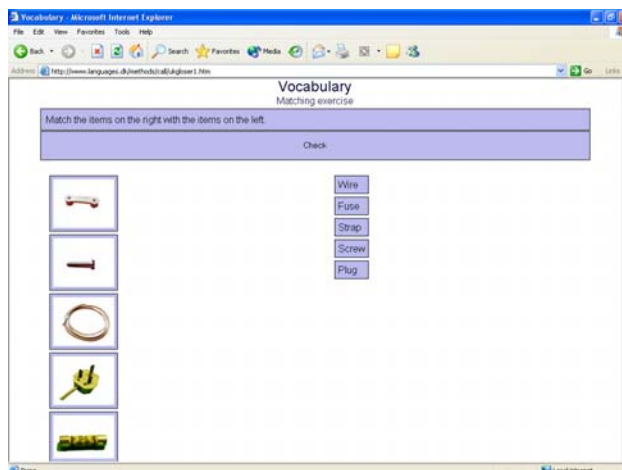
a. Watch the video giving instructions on how to wire a British plug



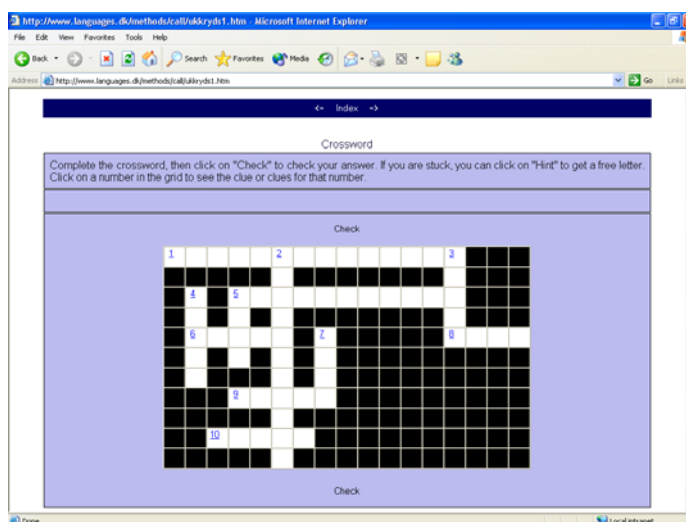
Read the text while listening to the video.



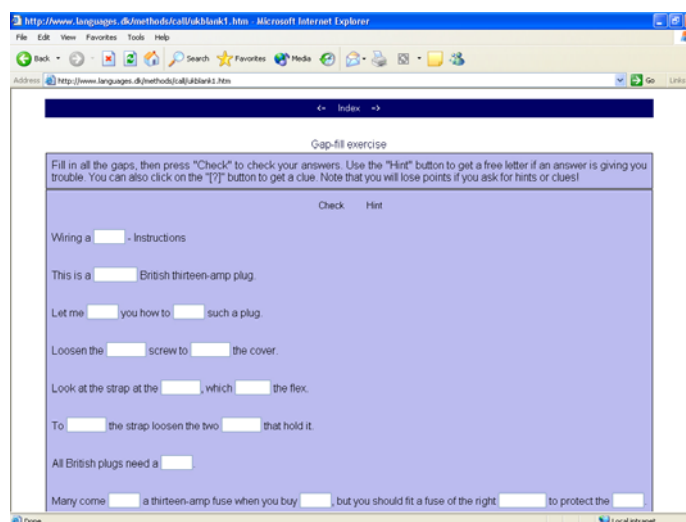
b. An option is to test the understanding of the content by clicking on a flag (with translation)



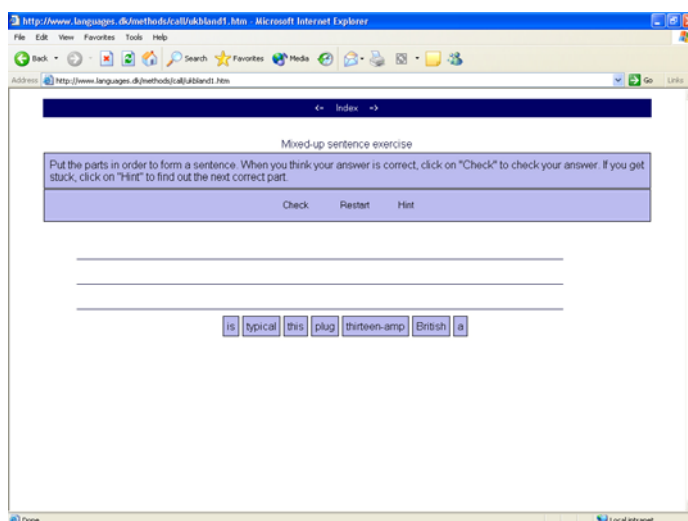
Place words next to photos of tools to learn the technical vocabulary.



c. Work with a word puzzle containing the technical vocabulary



d. Work with a “fill in the missing words” exercise from the video text



e. Work with ordering a “jumbled words” exercise to make instructions

3. When the students have finished the work at the computers, remembering that students need not finish simultaneously, they receive a text version of the same instructions. The texts can be downloaded from <http://www.languages.dk/methods/materials.html>

4. The students work in pairs; student A instructs student B to wire a British plug, student B may help student A with the language, but she must not do anything that student A does not instruct her to do. The text may be used as supplementary help, but the students should try to avoid this.



5. The students change roles and repeat the activity above

End of pre-task