# SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF UPDATE TECHNOLOGIES AND METHODS OF ESP TRAINING

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**Annotation:** It is important to use modern technologies and methods in ESP training. For the past ten years, technology has been moving fast. It has been moving so fast that new products become obsolete even more quickly than before or they are being continually transformed. As there is often a gap between what is available to the average teacher and what the researcher would like to design, this paper is in a way an attempt to keep up both as teacher and as researcher.

**Keywords:** ESP training, English language, modern technologies, method.

## INTRODUCTION

Advances in computer technology, such as hypertext facilities, the ability to store increasingly large amounts of data —sound is notorious for being space-hungry— and the very recent digital video (*Quicktime* for Macintosh and *Video for Windows* for PCs), are attracting the attention of teachers because, for the first time, a reasonably satisfactory learning environment can be set up for students. This is a great improvement on traditional CALL programmes in that the new technologies bring together the elements considered necessary for successful language learning: sound, still pictures, video, and of course, text and text-based exercises.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The potential of these three technological advances, is enormous. With hypertext, units of text (usually a computer screen) can be linked up to others. The nodes are interconnected and each node contains several links to other nodes. The user must activate the available links to proceed to another node. The order in which the links are activated depends entirely on the user. This principle can be applied not only to text but also to other resources.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital video is the latest step towards the integration of resources. *Quicktime* was launched in January 92 and is supplied with all new Macintosh machines. *Video for Windows* came out in January 93 in the US and in March 93 in France where it sells for less than FF1500. Few products, however, exist for the time being and there is scant research on the potential benefit of using hypertext for language learning since applications are just beginning to be developed. But it is possible to assess

some of the ways in which hypermedia can make a valuable contribution to language learning.

SPEAK 92! is devoted to English for Business in an American context. Two versions of the package exist, one on videodisk and another designed with *Quicktime* called the 'lite version'. It offers ten to fifteen minutes of video on screen. Owing to compression techniques, the standard speed of images has been improved, from 15 per second under *Quicktime* to 20 per second with a Raster Ops card.

*Speaker* has been on the market for two years as an authoring tool, but a new version is being developed on Windows, using *Video for Windows*. The whole package is easier to use than other well-known multimedia authoring systems such as *Authorware Professional*, and is aimed at teachers or resource centre organisers with little or no computer experience. It is quite flexible. Apart from the handling of text and text-based exercises, it can deal with [1]:

Sound: It is possible to record a native speaker's voice, and then have students record and compare. Different types of graphs are available, either displaying a type of spectogram, or a bar chart indicating the stress in the sentence in visual form. There are other phonetics-based exercises which enable the user to listen to a sentence and then indicate on the screen in different colours where the stress is, whether there are elisions, where the weak form is, where sounds have to be linked. It can also be used in a more traditional form for listening comprehension with simple gap-filling exercises, accompanied by evaluation and correction.

Scanner: Scanning images takes a matter of seconds, and it is then possible to keep only part of the image if need be, or enlarge it with a zoom. Of course, images are relevant to any kind of language course, but this facility is especially useful for ESP since it enables the author to include technical documentation, illustrations, or graphs.

OCR: Optical Character Recognition is also available. Thanks to the toolbox facility, the user can choose any commercially available OCR system which best meets his needs.

Pictures from a camcorder are digitised instantly as well. This is useful for short scenes enacted by native speakers, or even for the students themselves to practise interviews, so that they are able to see instantly what is wrong with their performance and to rework it until they get the expected result.

Flexible solutions for structuring hypermedia should therefore be found, perhaps by suggesting different modes of access, such as [3]:

• an exploratory mode with or without the help of keywords

• a guided tour, with a recommended pathway to follow, with a number of nodes that the learner is strongly recommended to visit, in which case it is advisable that the user be able to visualize a representation of the nodes and of the links.

• a semi-tutorial mode, where the designer keeps a hypertext-like presentation of the help facilities but within modules that have to be accessed in a pre-defined order, the ideal situation being that one hypermedia package could be accessed in different modes according to the user's wishes and needs.

Does this mean that the claims for a better learner-centred approach, thanks to multi- and hypermedia, are lost? Learner-centredness and learner control have become buzzwords, and if we are to believe Ian Tudor, "...the essential feature of a learner- centred approach is that it caters for active participation by learners in the development of their study program." (Tudor 1992) The student should be given as much autonomy as possible. Of the necessary conditions mentioned by Tudor, I will quote three [4]:

• high motivation

• identification of needs

• students showing a mastery of their own learning process, i.e., a degree of maturity.

**CONCLUSION**

I have not presented an invented-here-user-friendly or user-cuddly brand new discovery, but I think that anticipation of what is going to become available in a not too distant future and trying to see what can be done in the meantime is useful. For people at the sharp end of technology, this might be a little frustrating. Consolidation is sometimes as necessary as invention even if less exciting. Research is far from being unanimously uncritical about unrealistically high expectations concerning learning gains that might be impossible to sustain.

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