

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Again it is my great pleasure as the editor of *Teaching English with Technology* to present the subscribers with the new issue of this practical journal for teachers interested in using technology, computers and the Internet in the classroom. This time the whole issue is devoted to electronic dictionaries, also known as Machine Readable Dictionaries (MRDs). This decision has been made due to great demand for the reliable and thorough information about using these in teaching and learning, and the aim of the Journal editorial board is to provide a multi-faceted view on dictionaries, as well as to acknowledge their potential and record the breakthrough.

The Journal groups contributions on different kinds of dictionaries: online, accessible on the Web, as well as CD-ROM, demanding CD-ROM discs to be run. When talking about the former, it must be mentioned that there is a great number of free dictionaries on the Web, and language learners can use them usually without any limits. However, they are often limited in scope or use, and, what is more, are less sophisticated than commercial CD-ROM products. Also, they are less reliable in the sense that the sites supporting them may cease to exist. Thus, what seems to be necessary is to give language teachers and learners reliable information on which dictionaries should be recommended, as well as how to draw on the great multitude of information on the Web to produce one's own mini-dictionaries.

On the other hand, major ELT publishers have acknowledged the great potential of multimedia software in language learning, as a result producing more and more computer programs. Dictionaries are no exception here, and there is a new electronic dictionary published every two/three years by major publishers. This time what seems to be missing is the objective comparison of them, putting the manufacturers' claims to test, and recommending particular dictionaries for certain groups of learners. The current issue of the Journal tries to meet this objective by providing a comparative test of the dictionaries.

Finally, it must be said that making dictionaries is a work in progress, and a number of people all over the world are currently working on it. The Journal also reflects this, and we will have voices from the two opposing positions: that of an academic, saying what features a perfect Machine-Readable Dictionary should possess in order to be fully applicable in language teaching and learning; and that of a programmer, giving a detailed description of how he created and developed a Machine-Readable Dictionary that can be customised to fit one's needs.

Thus, to give a detailed outline of the Journal's contents, the readers can enjoy reading two articles: one, by Włodzimierz Sobkowiak, is entitled "What Can Be, But Is Not (And Why), In Learners' MRDs," strives to pinpoint some deficiencies of existing MRDs, as well as proposes some ways of improving them to suit the classroom needs. On the other hand, Leszek Bajkowski, in his article "Multilingual Data Organiser (M.D.O.) - An Overview of a Small-Scale Project" presents the steps of dictionary making on the example of the one made by the author, trying to provide some solutions to the problems posed in Sobkowiak's article. Electronic dictionaries are also prominent in the Internet Lesson Plans section, where the contributors, Beata Waligorska-Olejniczak ("Getting Ready for the Euro") and Mirosława Podgórska ("Different Shades of Madness"), show how using electronic dictionaries in the classroom can greatly facilitate classroom instruction by providing fast and easy access searching a great amount of data.

Guo Shesen, when writing about customizing English dictionaries in A Word from a Techie section, claims that with the great abundance of materials on the Web, learners no longer have to be constrained to a single dictionary or search engine when trying to look up a word. The author gives a step-by-step instruction on how to create a simple but powerful Web dictionary, fully adaptable to one's particular needs.

As for Website Reviews, most probably there is the only one contribution possible in this special issue devoted to electronic dictionaries, namely the review of a number of online dictionaries. This is done by Mari Carmen Campoy Cubillo in her "General and Specialised Free Online Dictionaries", where the author investigates an enormous number of Web dictionaries, devoting particular attention to such aspects as the means of access, the quality of images, the incorporation of sound, any special features, and gives some advice on the choice of a dictionary.

To balance the previous contribution, and to provide detailed information on CD-ROM dictionaries, the humble undersigned, Jarek Krajka, does a comparative review of two newly-published CD-ROM dictionaries, *Macmillan English Dictionary* and *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary*, focusing especially on the content of entries, searching capabilities, dictionary components, working with the dictionary, integrating the dictionary with other programs, interface and mode of use, ease of use and reliability of operation, assistance to the user and the ways of practicing the retention of words.

In Reports from Past Events section, it is also the undersigned who gives an account of the conference "Use of New Technologies in Foreign Language Teaching", which was held in Compiègne, France, from 28 to 30 March, 2002.

Finally, it is hoped that this wide array of contributions in all Journal sections will try to encompass the widest possible range of applications of electronic dictionaries in the foreign language classroom.

I wish you good reading.