

Title of Session: EuroLang - Parapal

Moderator: Bee Dieu

Guest Speaker: Charlie Williams

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BeeD: So...let's start! I am your host tonight. Phil is at a conference in Dusseldorf and could not make it.

BeeD: Welcome to tonight's session of the Euro Language Teachers Forum! Charlie Williams will present Parapal, a suite of interactive language learning exercises.

SusanneN: Hello from Farum near Copenhagen in Denmark

BeeD: **** Everyone please introduce yourselves ****

CharlieGst1: Hi all, thanks for coming to see my site.

AlainKr: Hello from Orleans, Loire valley, France

BeeD: Barbara Dieu teaches English at the Lycee Pasteur, a Franco-Brazilian school in Sao Paulo, Brazil and is also responsible for the Time Classroom Twinning activity in Time project

AlainKr: I teach English to French pupils

MarySusGst7: Hello everyone. My name is Mary Susan and I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia in Reading Education.

AlainKr: students too

CharlieGst1: I'll quickly introduce myself. I've mainly been teaching EAP in Australia. But I'm in England now.

SarahLi: Hi. I'm Sarah, a student at the University of Connecticut. I am a Spanish education major.

ElbaR: Hi I'm Elba and I am a pre-service teacher here in Houston, I am a U of H student and can't wait to get certified in Texas

BeeD: Kelly?

KellyMB: Hi! I'm Kelly. I'm a first grade teacher in Indianapolis, Indiana and I am currently getting my master's in technology education.

GavinM: HI. I'm an EFL teacher trainer and am increasingly getting involved in e-learning

AlainKr: Er... what's U of H ???

ElaineH: Hi my name is Elaine from Israel- I'm head of ICT at a teaching college

ElbaR: U of H is University of Houston

CharlieGst1: OK, I'll explain the background of my site.

BeeD: I think we can start Charlie..the show is yours

CharlieGst1: I started teaching EAP in Poland, to very critical, European educated students.

CharlieGst1: Then I started teaching a wide range of students EAP in Australian language centres.

ElbaR: What's EAP

AlainKr: Yep, dat's a good question

CharlieGst1: They were more interested in English so they could study at Western universities, and therefore needed IELTS scores.

BeeD listens attentively

CharlieGst1: EAP is English for Academic purposes, for students who want to study in universities.

AlainKr: Oooh, OK

ElbaR: Sorry I may sound really dumb but... What is IELTS scores

CharlieGst1: IELTS (And TOEFL) are the internationally recognized Exams for English.

ElbaR: Thanks Charlie for explaining

CharlieGst1: Anyway, in Australia the students were from all over, but mainly from Asia (with some South Americans)

CharlieGst1: Asia in particular has very different learning styles to the West, and also very different styles of written communication.

AlainKr: and how did Parapal fit in ?

ElbaR: Wow you have taught an array of students each possessing unique cultures and customs

CharlieGst1: I became very interested in how to teach them to follow the Western style of writing, with topic sentences etc.

CharlieGst1: I created very rigidly structured essays that I then cut up and asked them to put back into order, by looking at the logic.

ElbaR: Why the Western style of writing

AlainKr: Yes, couldn't they learn English and develop their own logic of writing?

BeeD: Is eastern style writing very much different from ours?

CharlieGst1: Whether it is good or bad, academic staff expect certain standards of writing from students. The Eastern logic can be described as circular, while a Western essay is very hierarchical.

AlainKr: Hmmm

BeeD: How interesting! Have never come across it.

CharlieGst1: Most Western people would be very confused by the logic of Eastern writing

SusanneN: In Webheads, we have sometimes seen how students from Taiwan or Japan have a different way of writing

AlainKr: Perhaps these differences exist in European writing as well to some extent ?

CharlieGst1: Latin speakers often digress more than Northern Europeans.

SusanneN: I'd like to see your Parapal site, Charlie, can you give us the URL here?

BeeD: Take English and French...:-)

AlainKr: True !!!!

CharlieGst1: They bring in asides and other information,

AlainKr: And, by the way...

AlainKr: Sorry Charlie ;?)

CharlieGst1: Anyway, I made these texts, and started a Masters in CALL at the same time

ElbaR: I love how the eastern writing is done because it comes full circle never missing the point

CharlieGst1: Looking around the Internet I found a great site by the Victoria University of Wellington, which had cut up texts like mine, but interactive.

CharlieGst1: The only problem with the site was there was not enough content, only 2 or 3 texts.

AlainKr: Kawabata's Master of Go or whatever the Eng translation is, wow

ElbaR: I imagine this activity would be very difficult because different people will rearrange the article differently

CharlieGst1: That's quite right Elba.

CharlieGst1: However, if we as teachers are teaching about topic sentences and logical Western structure it is possible to do it.

SusanneN: Charlie, can I have a look at your page; some of us were a bit late

BeeD: So, how did you get to Parapal?

ElbaR: Different people would have different logics....How interesting....did this activity work?

CharlieGst1: Maybe now is a good time to look at the page.

AlainKr: OK

SusanneN smiles

BeeD claps her hands in delight!

CharlieGst1: www.parapal-online.co.uk/eap.htm

AlainKr: What shall we start with ?

BeeD: Will you guide us?

CharlieGst1: Try the first one, Car, text ordering.

AlainKr: Advice or another link ?

CharlieGst1: I hope everyone has Flash 6 player

SusanneN: those letters are really tiny

BeeD: what kind of software is that?

CharlieGst1: If you are using IE you can make the page bigger with F11

AlainKr: That's really nice stuff

CharlieGst1: The software design is mainly mine, with help from Flash.

AlainKr: I didn't have much time to explore it before, but it's real neat

CharlieGst1: It's probably a little confusing at first, I hope the interface works.

KellyMB: That's really neat Charlie!

BeeD: How do I move a sentence I placed wrong?

ElbaR: Oh I see it is not that difficult since there are all these great clues like, firstly, secondly and in conclusion.....these really help

CharlieGst1: As Elba said, there are maybe different ways of putting the text together. (Click undo for mistakes)

GavinM: It's fine. Should be very intuitive for students accustomed to EAP work and jumbled texts.

CharlieGst1: This was the original exercise, since then I have added a cloze, proofreading and multiple choice.

CharlieGst1: These allow flexible access. Lower students can do the cloze first, then go back to try the text ordering.

GavinM: Follow-up work to help promote noticing of the pertinent features-great!

SusanneN: I am afraid I am not very linear in my thinking; although I'm from North Europe - I tried three times but did not get a correct result; at last now I know that I can use Flash 6

BeeD: This is very nice Charlie...really slick!

CharlieGst1: Obviously it's not meant to be done very quickly. It's very good if students do it in pairs, they can discuss why it is the way it is

ElbaR: Wow!! this is a great activity....very easy to manipulate and very interactive

GavinM: The discourse markers are generally the key to solving it successfully, though following the logical progression of info and considering what is new info and old info also provides clues

GavinM: Is there a chance for Ss to interact while doing it?

CharlieGst1: If you go back, maybe try the cloze.

CharlieGst1: Gavin has found a problem? Of sorts.

GavinM: No problem! Looks great !

CharlieGst1: There isn't much collaboration, unless you do it in a classroom.

BeeD: The sound scared me...lol...did not expect it!

SusanneN: Charlie, this is an interesting way of arranging exercises

GavinM: Could they maybe use the chat in the library? out of curiosity...

CharlieGst1: However, some of the exercises link to a discussion board.

GavinM: Wonderful!

CharlieGst1: And of course they can use the chat library. If they can download the atmosphere software

CharlieGst1: Has anyone tried the cloze?

SusanneN: I wonder if there is a way I can make the letters easier to read; they are both tiny and grey

ElbaR: great the children can get immediate feedback this way

CharlieGst1: Try making the browser bigger (in IE press F11) the player will get bigger

GavinM: Mmmm! Talking about the exercises has always got to be a good thing

BeeD: I have tried the cloze Charlie...it's nice...but some other answers would fit as well

CharlieGst1: The idea is to use the same text for a wide range of exercises. Flexible learning and reinforcement.

ElbaR: I agree

GavinM: Sounds great

ElbaR: This allows the child to succeed

CharlieGst1: The way the cloze works is for the speed of authoring (at the moment). I think it's probably better to have more opportunity to practice, than to have one exercise which accepts any possible answer

KellyMB: I like that there is immediate feedback and that the student can self correct their answers.

SusanneN thinks this looks MUCH easier now that I can read the words; I just clicked the full screen in upper right corner of IE (but on my keyboard, f11 did something else)

CharlieGst1: I am developing a version which accepts more answers, and remember it's really designed for young adults and adults

BeeD: I love the multi-choice

CharlieGst1: It does depend on which words you take out, generally I take out propositions and articles.

ElbaR: I think we can tweak it for a younger crowd as well...

CharlieGst1: I've got a happier version, in yellow, with a bigger font (I may have to rethink the font size of the main one too!)

CharlieGst1: It's for kids.

CharlieGst1: Maybe have a look at the next group down, enrollments. It has a pop up graph to follow with the text.

ElbaR: Yes I love the graph

CharlieGst1: As Elba and Bee both said there is sometimes limited freedom in terms of the answer, (the text ordering allows 3 combinations of answer)

BeeD: I cannot find the graph...where is it?

CharlieGst1: It is necessary to be a little careful in the design of the text for any of the exercises.

GavinM: click on 'chart' on the right

CharlieGst1: There should be a button which says chart

BeeD: I'm on the main page...cannot find the chart

ElbaR: Well how did you come up with the text, did you make them up yourself or did you grab them from an outside source

BeeD: Got it!

CharlieGst1: I made the texts myself, for two reasons. (the button isn't on the main page, it's on the exercise)

CharlieGst1: Copyright, and I wanted them to match my class's needs.

CharlieGst1: It also teaches you to understand what you are asking the students to do.

ElbaR: definitely... good thinking..... I see your thinking

CharlieGst1: I'm trying to think of ways to cope with several bugbears of students,

SusanneN: bugbears of students, how do you mean Charlie?

CharlieGst1: Essay structure, articles and prepositions, word forms (and families) and style

ElbaR: I love the drop and drag vocabulary activity...

BeeD: How long does it take you to make an exercise like that, Charlie?

CharlieGst1: They are all things that need practice, but it's probably better if it can be contextualized

CharlieGst1: The actual texts can vary in time, and often need to be rewritten

BeeD: So you can add images, sound and video to it?

CharlieGst1: However, the cloze and text ordering can be quite quick to make once you have the text. With the cloze you just tell the computer which type of word to take out (eg to, from, with, the etc)

ElbaR: Charlie are there any other site you might recommend...

CharlieGst1: It's easy to add mp3 audio, but video would be opening in another window.

CharlieGst1: On my site there is a links page which has my favourite sites

BeeD: I see...was just listening to the supermarket song...are you the performing artist ?

ElbaR: Thanks...I have not checked that out yet...duuuuh

CharlieGst1: The vic uni site, one called Flo Jo and several others. All very good,

CharlieGst1: No, the song belongs to my friend Andy. It's popular at the moment

ElbaR: Great thanks

CharlieGst1: There are more links and explanations under the professional links, a couple of Uni essays which looks at other sites

CharlieGst1: Before we finish, are these types of exercise useful? Are they too behaviourist?

CharlieGst1: Some people have said they are not very naturalistic?

BeeD: A couple of these from time to time won't do students any harm...quite on the contrary

KellyMB: I think these exercises are great. I've gotten some ideas on things I can do in my own classroom now. Teaching 1st grade, I will obviously have to do things quite different, but you've definitely gotten my mind thinking!

CharlieGst1: I hope that they can help students with things that otherwise need a lot of teacher marking time.

ElbaR: No, I think these are great activities I love that they are interactive....I wish they would have the child's creativity and style come out a little more..other than that they are o.k. I think my kids would love these activities

GavinM: They're great. Common enough practice in the classroom and if they can be self-access, and with instant feedback, all the better!

MarySusGst7: I work with struggling readers in tutoring situations and these exercises look like something that my students could definitely get help from.

BeeD: Great work Charlie!

CharlieGst1: I think it might help with noticing by encouraging really intensive reading, and taking note of lexical and stylistic features.

ElbaR: You did a great job of creating these...

CharlieGst1: Finally. On the front page there's a link to a download for students. I really believe in student autonomy

MarySusGst7: I really like what I've seen. Where can we get more information about creating these kinds of exercises on our own?

CharlieGst1: It's a little machine that allows students to make their own cloze exercises.

BeeD: You took the words from my mouth Mary!

CharlieGst1: If you contact me I can show you places with free software (the biggest is Hot Potatoes), but there are others.

CharlieGst1: I can give you a copy of the cloze and vocabulary exercises if you want.

BeeD: I would love to!

MarySusGst7: I would appreciate that!

ElbaR: How can we get these and how do we get in contact with you....I love free stuff...

CharlieGst1: To contact me e-mail charlie.williams@parapal-online.co.uk

CharlieGst1: I'll sort out a list of free software too.

MarySusGst7: Thanks so much!

ElbaR: Thanks Charlie I enjoyed this forum and hope to be on another with you soon!!!

CharlieGst1: I guess that's it for now.

BeeD: Thanks Charlie for this very nice session and sharing your work with us!

CharlieGst1: Thanks for coming and staying for the presentation

MarySusGst7: This was my first Tapped In session and I really enjoyed it.\

CharlieGst1: I hope I've given some ideas.

AlainKr: Bye, thanks for all

KellyMB: Thanks Charlie! See you all soon!

GavinM: Thanks Charlie- very informative and well run discussion. Best of luck with the new site!

CharlieGst1: Cheers Gavin

BeeD: Next week we will have Elaine with her Israel-US joint writing project

BeeD waves goodbye to everyone

CharlieGst1: See you again, many thanks all.