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Language teachers can now take their students on multimedia visits to foreign companies

Language teachers have always tried to find ways for their students to work with authentic language material in authentic situations. A visit to a foreign country provides a great opportunity for this but is very expensive and takes a lot of effort to arrange. However, this article will show how a multimedia CD-ROM may be an excellent alternative. The Business Territory CD-ROM program, developed and produced by Lingonet, allows both teachers and students to visit a Cambridge electronics company by interacting with material on a CD-ROM. Students can 'interview' ten employees in different departments of the company, learning about the people, their jobs, and the company itself. The interviews are all unscripted and contain a wealth of natural, idiomatic 'working' English.

A multimedia visit is convenient and linguistically rewarding

The user interface of Business Territory has been welcomed by teachers who have found it simple and intuitive. There is no need for previous experience with computers and so Business Territory is an ideal introduction for teachers who would like to start using multimedia in the classroom. When you open the program, you see the main menu on the screen, with a list of all the main areas (topics, exercises etc) and with all the interviewees represented by icons (Picture 1).



Picture 1. The interviewees and the list of contents are presented in the main menu of Business Territory.

A superficial introduction to the company could start with the teacher giving each pair of students the task of finding information about a particular employee and then presenting it to the rest of the group. Clicking on the picture of the interviewee opens the interview screen (Picture 2), which displays as cue cards all the questions and answers (Picture 3).



Picture 2. The interview screen gives you access to the video interviews with different employees.

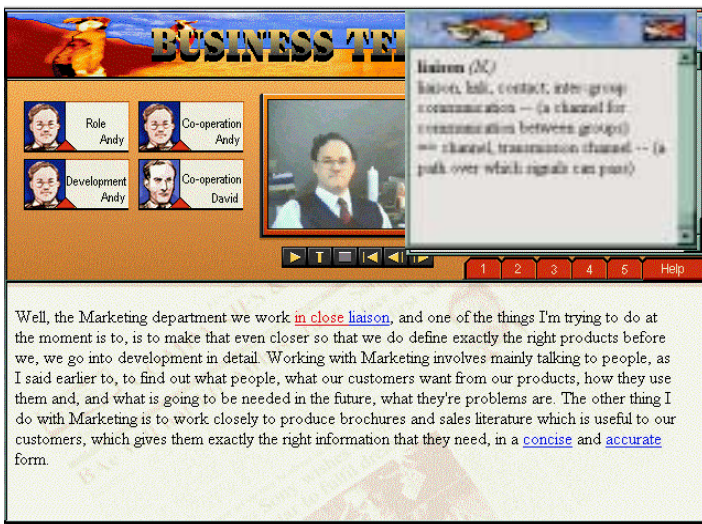


Picture 3. Each cue card represents one question-answer pair.

For every person there is a cue card with the key word 'Intro'. This is a good choice if you are just going to introduce the person. Clicking on the key word allows you to listen to the question asked, while clicking on the picture starts the video clip in which the interviewee answers the question. This is where the benefits of multimedia start to appear: the question can be replayed by simply clicking on the cue card again and after the second listening the text is displayed. Equally, after watching the video clips twice a T button is highlighted below the video screen and by clicking it you get access to the transcript of the video clip. This is a definite advantage over real life...

The cue card has yet another element, a little red triangle, which plays a paraphrase of the answer, i.e. a simpler and more clearly spoken version of what the interviewee actually says.

The transcript of the interviewee's response has 'hypertext' links (Picture 4) to the glossary or to comments recorded by a language teacher. Clicking on a word highlighted in blue opens a glossary window (Picture 4). A red highlight shows that there is a link to a linguistic or cultural comment.



Picture 4. The text window allows the user to read the transcript of the interviewee's response.



Teacher-On-Demand (Picture 5) is activated by clicking on text highlighted in red. A transcript of the comments is also available after the second listening.

Picture 5. Comments offer both linguistic material and background information.

Multimedia allows the visit to be presented in different ways

In this kind of application a CD-ROM constitutes a flexible multimedia database. The great advantage of today's personal computers is that they can seamlessly combine video, audio, pictures and text. This means that an interview becomes an multifaceted language 'package', which can be viewed in many different ways.

In Business Territory the main menu allows the user to choose between a personal perspective and a topical perspective on the material. Earlier we saw how clicking on a picture in the main menu gives access to the entire interview with that particular person. Clicking on 'Topics' in the main menu calls up the topical menu, where you can choose from the following:

- My typical working day
- How to deal with difficult people
- Developing new products
- My career history
- How my job has changed
- How this industry changes
- Work benefits
- Logistics
- Testing products
- Reacting to market trends

In total there are ten interviewees, eleven job descriptions, and sixteen topics which fully exploit and extend the video material.

Reporting back after a visit to a company

If a visit to a foreign company is to have real benefits, it should be followed by written and oral reports. This is true of a multimedia visit as well. If the visit is part of a course, it may be advisable to restrict the demands made on students at first. Introducing the employees, as described above, may well be one of the starting points, since it gives the user the chance to try out each aspect of the program. Business Territory includes a section called 'Teacher's Territory' which allows the teacher to print out task sheets that act as templates for writing the travel report. The task can be done in many different ways depending on the number of students and how the task fits into the curriculum.

One effective way of working is to divide the students into groups of three and to print out a different tasksheet for each group. The task sheets are all ready for printing out in Teacher's Territory under the heading 'Reporting Tasks'. Here are a few examples:

After the groups have worked through their own tasks they can then be asked to report back to the other students. On the basis of these reports each student should be given a 500-word written assignment in which they cover their major findings from the company visit.

Benefits of the job

Watch the video clips related to the topic of benefits provided by the company. Write down at least six different benefits you hear and who receives them.

Benefit	Who gets it?
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	
6)	

What products are made by Cablevision?

Watch the interviews with Maureen Green, Les Shortall, and Martin Smith. What industry is Teleste Cablevision involved with?

Cablevision is part of the industry.

Name at least two kinds of products made by Cablevision.

1)

2)

Other:

.....

What kind of changes in the industry will affect the products and services Cablevision offers in the future?

.....

.....

.....

.....

While working on this assignment the students may find that their notes are incomplete. At this point another benefit offered by a multimedia visit stands out - you can return to the site over and over again.

A large variety of tasks

Since students are asked to report their observations in English, they obviously need to pay attention to linguistic points as well as noting down factual information. To this end the interviews are bundled with language auditing tasks that enhance the learning of the language.

Business Territory includes a comprehensive set of tasks that challenge more advanced students as well. Take for example the following task:

Job advertisements

In groups, choose one of the job titles from the list below.

management secretary
receptionist
off-line test inspector
operational managing director
technical manager
business development manager
security officer
company secretary
production manager
despatch manager

Watch the appropriate video then, imagining that the person has left Cablevision, write a job advertisement for the position.

LOOKING FOR NEW HORIZONS?

Then look no further.

Cambridge
(Job title)
(Salary)

Teleste Cablevision is the leading UK manufacturer of amplifiers and filters for TV signal distribution. We are looking for an ambitious (job title) to assist our young (department) team.

In this role, you will have the opportunity to

.....
.....

Your main responsibilities will include

.....

The position will also involve

The successful candidate will probably be

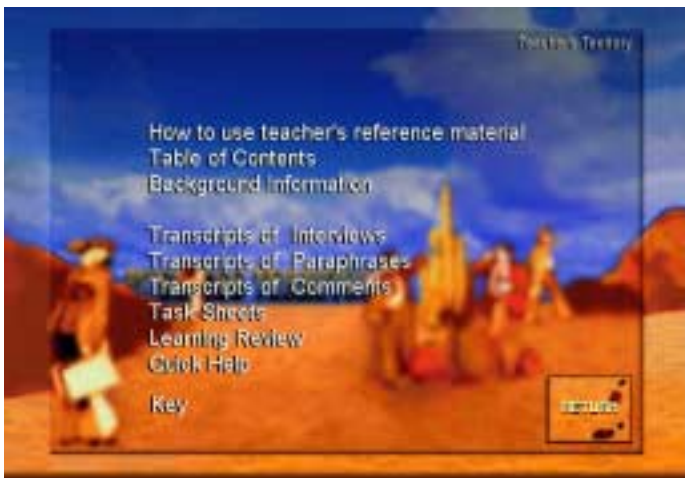
To apply, send your CV with a covering letter to the Human Resources Department, Teleste Cablevision Ltd, etc, before the closing date of 29th November 199-.

Pin up your job advertisement on the classroom wall for others to see.

For students who are already established in their careers, the language learned from Business Territory can be put to immediate use in presenting their own jobs. Students have a strong motivation to borrow expressions from the interviewees in Business Territory because the language is clearly real, idiomatic working English, not the artificial language often found in traditional textbooks. Moreover, a lot of idiomatic expressions - for example, 'there's no such thing as a typical working day' - are used again and again by different interviewees, and the repeated exposure helps to encourage learning.

We have suggested that a multimedia visit offers a rich linguistic experience, as does the real thing. However, without work the language will not be acquired by the students. That's why Business Territory has a wide variety of exercise material to support students' learning. Each topic is followed by check-up work which is intended to be done immediately so that students can see how much progress they are making. Two task menus under the headings 'Group work' and 'Exercises' offer more in-depth language work. In addition, the teacher's material in Teacher's Territory contains oral reporting tasks.

Teacher's Territory is password protected and can be accessed only by the teacher. As well as the student tasksheets, it contains the answers to all the exercises and information on how to make the most of Business Territory (Picture 6).



Picture 6. Teacher's Territory contains a wealth of support material for the teacher.

The benefits to the user will be decisive to the future of multimedia

There is often a lack of perspective in discussions about multimedia. However, as far as language learning products are concerned, what we are looking at is merely the latest phase in a very long development process. This process started as early as the 17th century when Comenius, in his book *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, added pictures to create contexts for linguistic expressions. The same idea is seen today in the use of authentic audio and video.

Computerized multimedia adds a further element - interactivity. In science teaching, multimedia now allows students to interact with simulation models. Equally, in language learning it is possible to create a multimedia version of learning situations which follow the 'Total Physical Response' methodology. However, in programs like Business Territory interactivity is primarily a means of accessing authentic material easily and of checking one's learning of component skills. With its wide support material, Business Territory aims to make it easier to use methods based on meaningful communication and, at the same time, to encourage real social interaction between students. The interactivity of Business Territory is interaction among people with the help of the authentic material offered by the program.

The quality of a program like Business Territory lies in both its ease of use and its effectiveness at promoting learning. During the development process, the material has been tested on a daily basis by language teachers and the results have been very encouraging in both respects. Teachers have been particularly appreciative of the fact that, unlike the vast majority of CD-ROM programs on the market, Business Territory has been designed as a teacher's tool and not as a self-study package.

Lingonet concentrates on language learning products

Business Territory is the first in a series of programs offering multimedia tools for language teachers. Along with the existing mainstream self-study packages our aim is to produce CD-ROM programs which help teachers to organize teaching sessions based on active and communicative working methods.

Business Territory will be followed shortly by a series called **Opinion Zone**, dealing with the language of expressing opinions. To collect the material for it Lingonet organized a series of 15 studio debates in Cambridge (UK) last autumn. The topics of these debates vary from banning handguns to the power of the press. In addition to the studio material we have a variety of interviews, with interviewees ranging from ministers to homeless people.

Opinion Zone programs aim to bridge the gap between receptive acquisition, through watching video material and understanding the language, to producing the language creatively, through spontaneous debate.



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