

Technology for Teaching: Proposal

Synopsis

The Department of Modern languages and Literatures would like to request \$3200 from the Technology for Teaching Project to support its project of building a library of digitized language-learning exercises based on music.

Background

During 2000-2001 a new system for delivering interactive language learning materials was purchased and installed by the Department. This system, CAN8 VirtuaLab, was used on a limited basis last spring. This fall, as more faculty have learned the system, its use has expanded; at present more than 150 students in 7 courses have weekly exercises on VirtuaLab. Although the system has many pedagogical possibilities, to this point the Department and its faculty employ it solely to deliver audio materials for language labs.

The Department's current project would use the technology of the VirtuaLab system to begin building a library of language-learning activities based on digitized songs. Many faculty have found music a highly effective pedagogy for language learning. Music opens minds, engages students, and permits variety in the activities by which one learns a language. The Department wishes to promote music-related pedagogies, and believes that by creating a bank of songs with accompanying activities this end will be served.

The present proposal seeks funds to launch what the Department foresees as an ongoing project of shared work and materials. We would like to begin by acquiring and digitizing songs in four languages: Russian, Spanish, German, and French. In each language materials will be divided into three levels: Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced – levels corresponding to courses offered in each language. The project will take place during the spring of 2002. During this time we hope to compile five songs at each level for four languages; a total of 60 songs. For each song, we will: 1) digitize the song; 2) transcribe the song, and organize the transcription to accompany the music as it plays (synchronize the lyrics to the music); and 3) create interactive language-learning activities to accompany each song.

We think that advanced language students with good skills in technology will be interested in undertaking this work with us. Students, especially those interested in careers in teaching, should find stimulating work and rewarding experience in assisting with selection of linguistically and culturally appropriate songs, learning the technology involved in using our VirtuaLab system, and designing and developing language-learning activities related to the music. Furthermore, the students will have an opportunity to observe language learners using the modules they've created, and will thereby have an opportunity to learn what "works" and what doesn't in this type of language-learning exercise.

Anticipated outcomes

- 1) A library of music-based, interactive language learning exercises accessible to instructors of all languages and at all levels at SLU.
- 2) Enhanced understanding of the VirtuaLab system on the part of the faculty involved in this project.
- 3) The students involved in this project will have gained valuable experience both in terms of teaching/learning technology and language learning pedagogy.
- 4) Once digitized into the VirtuaLab system, the songs can be made available to any department on campus via the network. We foresee uses for music in a variety of disciplines such as English, History, and Sociology, among others. In fact, any faculty member could develop lessons around the music in the VirtuaLab system.
- 5) Better understanding of issues of copyright and fair use as they apply to recorded music. This experience will benefit faculty in other disciplines who may also want to incorporate copies of music into their teaching.

Curricular impact

It is our belief that having a bank of culturally and linguistically appropriate songs available will benefit all levels of language learners. At the most basic level, having the music readily available will allow faculty to be more spontaneous about the inclusion of music in the curriculum, whether as a way to set the tone at the beginning of class, as a mood-changer during class, or as a pedagogical tool to bring out points of grammar, colloquial usages, or cultural innuendo. Furthermore, the bank of lessons based on the music will provide enhancements and alternatives to the sometimes bland audio exercises that accompany textbooks. We are excited at the prospect of exploiting the VirtuaLab technology further and enhancing our language learning options in this way.

Resources needed & estimated budget

We have attempted to estimate the time necessary to accomplish this goal. We believe that approximately 250 hours of student assistance will enable us to accomplish our goals. 250 hours x \$6.75/hour = approximately \$1700.

We have been in contact with Bart Harloe regarding copyright and fair use for the music we would like to use. It seems that there are at least two approaches to this issue. On the one hand, we can try to use the music free of charge under the concept of fair use. Although the details are not clear at this time, using music in this way will likely require that we use only a limited selection of songs from a given CD or perhaps only a portion of a song (e.g., one stanza and the chorus). Another approach is to pay for the right to use the materials. In the end, we will likely use a combination of approaches. Bart has agreed to take on this project as a case study for his staff, as this is an issue that needs addressing for many departments across campus. We are optimistic that, because our songbank will be available only to students enrolled in a given language course (controlled by the authentication system built into VirtuaLab), we will be able to comply with copyright and fair use requirements. Bart has suggested that \$1000 will suffice for the acquisition of rights for this initial phase of the project. We understand that it *may* become necessary to pay for rights at some future date in order to continue using the materials.

While several languages already possess CDs sufficient for the scope of this project, others will need to acquire music suitable for the songbank. (From experience we know that the quality of our recording will suffer if we use cassette tapes.) We have estimated \$500 for the purchase of further materials.

Summary:

Student assistants:	\$1700
Rights to music:	1000
CDs	500
TOTAL	\$3200

Members of the Department of Modern Languages participating in this proposal: Ingrid Stipa, Steven White, Ruth Kreuzer, Carine Ullom, Roy Caldwell.