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Around the sounds

INTRODUCTION

This research is carried out in order to illustrate the potential of using an interactive electronic book – inserted in a web site on English Phonetics and Phonology– as a Computer-Assisted System in the English Foreign Language Teaching at "Frank País" Teachers' Training College in Santiago de Cuba. This e-book genuinely delivers what many only promise: navigability, clear explanations of phonetics and phonological frameworks, wide-range accounts of segmental and suprasegmental features and most importantly, reasons why speech matters. This book could be an essential source for both newcomers to the subject and established disciples and it has much to offer, for example, it has a wide-ranging introduction to practical aspects of English Phonetics and Phonology, covers step by step the core concepts: production of speech, classification of vowels and consonants, speech apparatus, speech sounds, diphthongs, stress and intonation and it includes application of phonetics to language teaching and learning.

Development

This product is created in order to change the old conceptions into the new conceptions of the teaching-learning process, in which students' role has been accentuated as well as the attention of the emotional and intellectual aspects, the training of *teachers to be* to assume responsibilities in a world in quick and constant change and their flexibility to enter in a professional world that will demand information along lifetime.

This e-book achieved new student-users as active participants of a teaching-learning process where the emphasis moves from teaching to learning, which is closely related to knowledge, for new practices adapted to new educational situations every time. "*Around the sounds*" was designed to be delivered in CD-ROMs to students who are learning at a medium-range course, since there are not enough printed books of English Phonetics and Phonology for all of them.

"Around the Sounds offers:

- Access to a wide-range of learning resources: Access to a variety of information resources including libraries, computer bases, software, and experts in content and to other communication systems.
- Active control of the learning resources: manipulation of information actively, organization of information in different ways and elaboration complex cognitive structures. (thinking)
- Participation in individualized learning experiences based on users own abilities, knowledge, interests and objectives.

Besides, "Around the Sounds" propitiates new ways of learning, shows new and different ways of assimilating complex messages, the attention is captivated all the time because of the great support of learning by means of images (it illustrates every organ of speech in 3D) and sounds which help to develop imagination and creativity. It provides authentic intonation patterns and perfect sounds presentations because digitalization; plus, the sounds of the entire phonetic alphabet (can be listened through the multimedia speakers) so it facilitates student-users' self-training, the glossary, with a great amount of technical words, helps them to understand complex meanings and concepts. The system offers to users a great bibliography and opportunity, not only to perceive but also to imitate due to the diphthong, vocalic and consonantal sounds available from every corner of the web site, to discriminate sounds, to better understand its production and variation, to analyze isolated units, to describe and to distinguish sounds. The quality of the sounds contributes to listeners' impression; so students-users are capable of conveying difficult sounds, which could help them to improve intonation and linguistic competence.

Although diverse," Around the Sounds" shares several principles with the (ITS) Intelligent Tutorial Systems, one more point to believe that e-books are in a certain way better than printed books. Broadly, these principles are:

Construction not instruction: Students learn most effectively by constructing their own knowledge, not by being told through lecture, nor through organized drill-and-practice.

Student control not tutors control: It follows that students must have significant, if not exclusive control of the learning interaction. At most, the tutor is viewed as a guide, not a god.

Rich feedback generated by the student's interaction with an e-book not the tutor: Again, e-books agree that fined-grained feedback is critical learning. But they suggest that this rich information should arise as a function of the student's choices and actions in the learning environment, rather than as discourse generated by the tutor.

It is important to note, however, that the willingness of the students is predicted on the e-book. This points to the biggest hurdle to widespread e-book implementation in the educational realm.

Though, it is not explicitly stated, it is easy to infer a simple undertaken motive-to-create the first successful device because it is technologically feasible, the challenge is there and the rewards are likely to be great. It is already accepted everywhere that the potential benefits and conveniences of e-books to end-users are significant. Around the Sounds as an electronic book reading device do have advantages over the traditional printed books and existing electronic products, chief among these are capacity, readability and portability. Besides:

- ✓ It allows the development of different activities in a visual environment which it is necessary when studying English Phonetics and Phonology.
- ✓ It has constant interaction with the costumer.
- ✓ It can interact via Open Script and with external data bases as dbases, Paradox, and Oracle.
- ✓ It can be distributed on the Internet.
- ✓ It gives the possibility of analysing large corpora in a short period of time.
- ✓ It allows individualized learning in order to increase efficacy.
- ✓ It can be used for tutoring tasks or to provide information and demonstrations.

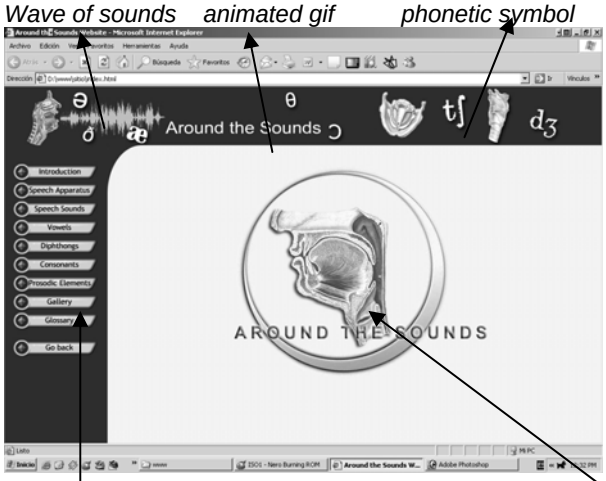
DESCRIPTION OF THE WEB SITE: "Around the Sounds"

"*Around the Sounds*" is an electronic book of English Phonetics and Phonology inserted in a web site, which has been designed with the aid of some applications such as Dream weaver UltraDev or Macromedia Dream weaver MX which it is a professional HTML editor to design, code and create web sites, web pages and applications web; Unlead Cool and Xara3D, a 'slimware' program that produces great, super high quality, three-dimensional 3D headings.

Around the sounds´ corpus is composed by six lessons or units which take the learner through an entire course of English Phonetics and Phonology. The book is created by interconnected web pages, third dimensional images, hypertexts and digitalized sounds.

Title of the system

Wave of sounds *animated gif* *phonetic symbol*



Flash bottoms. Index *Diagram of the speech apparatus*

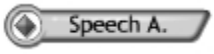
Fig. 1. - Home page.

Around the sounds´ home page (fig. 1) displays several elements representing the subject. In the upper part, it has a banner which shows the title of the system in an animated gif, it also has phonetics symbols, a diagram of the organs of speech and a wave of sounds.

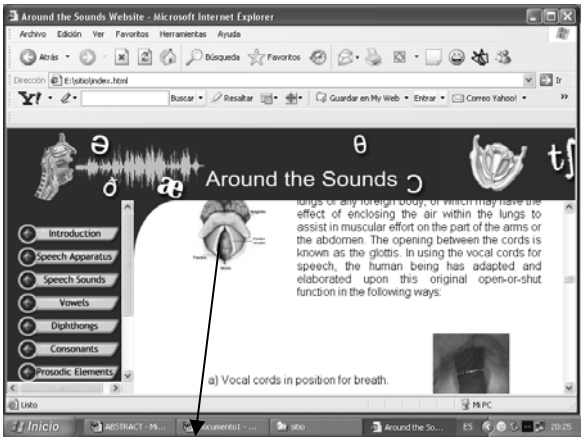
On the left side, there is another banner with 10 flash bottoms which allow the navigation inside of the system.

The

bottom is a must-see one which warms the learner up to what comes next.

The 

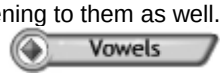
bottom takes learners to the screen where detail information about each of the organs of speech is given, their physiological analysis and show 3D images of each one of them.



3D images Organ of speech

The

bottom proposes information about different aspects of the speech sounds: how they are produced, how they are analysed and what they sound like, the present web site offers students the possibility of listening to them as well.

The 

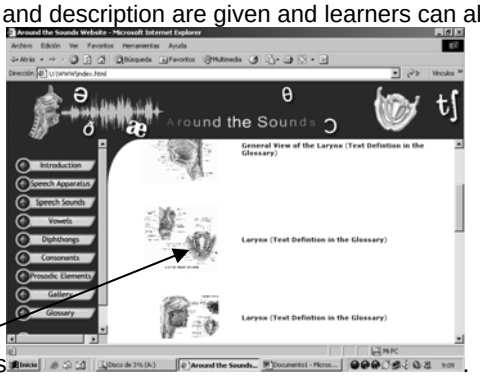
bottom presents data of the thirteen vocalic phonemes and it also has the file sounds of the vowels so learners can listen to them, the phoneme-grapheme audible correspondence, and the vowels´ articulatory description.

The

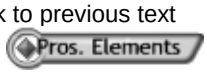
bottom proffers information of the phonological units called diphthongs, its classification, description and its phoneme-grapheme audible correspondence.

The

bottom takes learners to the screen where information about the English consonants, classification, and description are given and learners can also listen to each one of them.



Set of images.
Link to previous text

The 

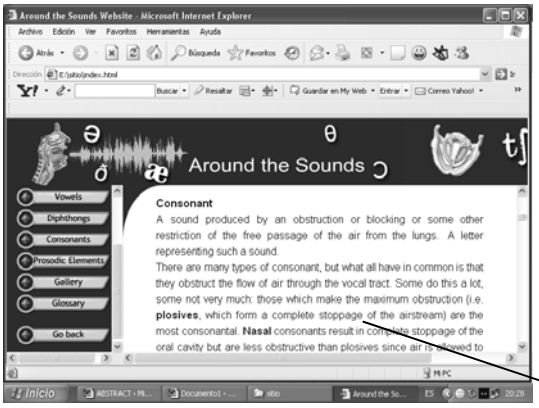
bottom takes learners to the screen where the analysis of structural features of words, clauses, sentences is done and the features marking beginnings, endings and junctures.

The

bottom displays multiple-view images of each one of the organs of speech.

The

bottom shows the meanings of phonetical and phonological terms from A to Z, which is linked to previous information.



Glossary

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bottom is used to turn back from any place the learner be.

"Around the Sounds" as an electronic books could take place in every teacher's digital collection, in which data, visualization and collaboration tools are guaranteed, so it is considered an optimal aid for communicating information and acquiring knowledge and it is also a high-quality vehicle for self-learning. and self- training.

In summary, then, the long-term role of electronic books (and computer-based technology in general) in education will *not* be to support traditional teaching and learning practices, but to challenge and even threaten them by suggesting *new things* to learn and offering *new ways* to acquire them. For this reason, it is misleading to view electronic books–*"Around the Sounds"*–or technology in general as a means of saving education. At best, they will *transform* schools and classrooms, not improve them in any simple sense.

Conclusion

This electronic book was designed to answer requests of the distance education process (medium-range courses), which is centered on students´ self-learning, to improve habits, abilities and attitudes towards the subject of English Phonetics and Phonology, This electronic book has enhanced the development of the students´ pronunciation and in the same way has improved their communicative competence. This subject has used tools of the electronical information and communication, to increase its efficiency.

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