
Auralog. *Tell Me More Campus Online* (French, Intermediate, and Intermediate Plus Levels).

Phoenix, AZ: Auralog, 2008. ISBN: 978-2-7490-1303-9. For more information, look at www.tellmemore.com.

For college instructors who want to move to online language teaching, *Tell Me More Campus* provides a well-designed, flexible, and technologically sophisticated solution. The Auralog Company has been in the business of computer-assisted language teaching since 1987, and has made interactive speech recognition technology the cornerstone of its language learning programs. It is the integration of this technology, whereby students not only listen to a recording of their voice compared to one made by native speakers, but also see a visual representation of both in the form of a computer-generated graph, that most distinguishes this product from similar programs. Part of its larger market consists of students learning outside of a classroom setting, often without an instructor; however, Auralog has adapted to such an environment very well with *Tell Me More Campus*. Although it more than adequately replaces the grammar and much of the vocabulary portion of a traditional French textbook, most instructors will want to supplement its rather meager cultural content with additional materials and look elsewhere for suitable classroom activities. Also, there is no literature component; if intermediate French serves as a gateway to literature classes, then teachers will have to require students to purchase one of the many anthologies available on the market to complement the program. Because the intermediate level builds on the knowledge that was learned in the Auralog beginning level (and prepares for the advanced levels), this program would probably be most effective if it were used at all levels of language instruction in a department.

Students can take an interactive online placement test in order to identify the appropriate level at which to begin. It consists of 64 questions that mix grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Many of the questions and multiple-choice answers are recorded rather than written, making this test easier for students who are used to the particular emphasis placed on listening comprehension. For students who have had less practice with listening than with the other language skills, this will be a challenge; in addition, there is a time limit

for answering each question, which might contribute to “test anxiety.” In spite of these reservations, I have no reason to doubt that this placement test succeeds in placing students at the appropriate level of the Auralog program. Still, since the program is likely to be only one of several components of a course, departments will want to keep their current instruments for determining placement within their curriculum, as opposed to placement within this particular program.

There is also a 90-minute long “Achievement Test” that can be taken repeatedly, with format and scoring modeled on the European *Test of English for International Communication* (TOEIC). It is a comprehensive test, also heavily weighted towards listening skills (five of the seven sections are audio-based and primarily test listening comprehension; two of them test grammar and vocabulary with multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions provided mostly in written format, and one of them tests reading comprehension). By taking the achievement or placement tests repeatedly, students can measure their progress on an 800-point scale. It might be useful to take the test at various points during the year, such as the end of each quarter or semester, in order to measure progress. Like the placement test, the achievement test relies heavily on listening comprehension skills and allots a limited amount of time for each question or series of questions, characteristics that require some getting used to. For grading purposes, instructors will want to design their own “chapter tests,” midterms, and finals that cover elements from the program as well as other materials used in their course.

The “intermediate” and “intermediate plus” French programs consist of almost thirty hours of exercises that students can complete at their own pace. Alternatively, instructors can select among the various components of the “modules” that make up the program, create customized assignments, and e-mail them to students as homework. The modules at the intermediate level consist of exercises and materials presented in twelve thematic “chapters,” as well as six additional short cultural readings. Each “chapter” begins with a brief video and interactive dialogue; a vocabulary list and accompanying exercises (e.g., listening to new words, then searching for them in a grid; fill-in-the-blank exercises; organizing words by theme, etc.); pronunciation exercises; grammar explanations, followed by appropriate exercises, such as sentence scrambles, conjugation, and writing exercises; and, finally, a dictation. The six “cultural modules” interspersed throughout consist of short texts followed by a series of reading comprehension questions. They certainly convey interesting cultural information, but the amount of reading provided is far less than what most classes at this level require. Not only will college instructors want to supplement this program with a literary anthology, as noted above, but most likely they will also want to incorporate additional thematic readings as well. The exercises are useful and engaging, comparable to the better online workbooks available today; the ones that most distinguish *Tell Me More Campus* from other online programs, however, are those that use speech recognition technology.

The grammar explanations are minimal, yet clear, and cover the structures appropriate for each level. If English is chosen as the portal language, the grammar explanations are in English; if French, they are in French. Instructors can require French as the portal language; if they do so, however, the vocabulary lists will no longer appear with English translations. This might not be a problem, pro-

vided the instructor explains and contextualizes vocabulary during class. Either way, the instructor will have to go elsewhere for help with classroom activities.

Auralog has done a commendable job of adapting what is fundamentally a program in individualized instruction and making it work in other learning environments. *Tell Me More Campus* provides comprehensive instruction in grammar, vocabulary, and cultural content appropriate for university language classes. Its biggest strength compared to other products on the market is its technologically sophisticated method for training the student's ear to the particularities of spoken French (through the high proportion of audio-based exercises) and teaching students how to reproduce them accurately with the voice recognition software. As long as an instructor supplements the program with additional readings (both literary and cultural), classroom activities, and in-class grammar lessons that reinforce and expand the explanations in the program, *Tell Me More Campus* can be an effective foundation for the intermediate French curriculum.

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Publisher's Response

Thank you for this kind and insightful review. The pedagogical experts and linguistic team at Auralog are passionate about producing a product that facilitates learning a language and supports all the needs of instructors. Since this review was written, the *Tell Me More Campus* program has seen some changes. In an effort to address the ever-changing needs of our students, Auralog has partnered with Europe's leading television news agency, EuroNews. Students studying English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian now receive a 15-30 minute weekly language lesson that includes news footage presenting an important current events topic.

Tell Me More will continue to develop to include more advanced reporting and tracking functionalities, printable workbooks and additional exercises, as well as more detailed catalogues listing all our various products.

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