criteria against which they assess candidates' translations. Since there are differences in grammar, syntax and vocabulary between the various languages, markers of the other language translations from English divide the text into five sections of equal difficulty. Because the other language texts are based on stimulus notes, the marker for the translation into English is provided with a model text upon which s/he can make her/his assessment.

The role of the Moderator is extremely important in the final assessment of both oral and written assessments. A careful analysis of the marks is made, in order to take into account any discrepancies in marking between individual markers. Tapes of the oral tasks are assessed by an independent assessor as a check on the individual oral examiners.

Criterion marking is used; a mark of 60% must be achieved in all tasks for a pass to be awarded. A distinction is awarded only if all tasks receive a mark of 80% or more.

The Institute believes that it is the right of each candidate who fails any task to request a Report of Performance. These reports are prepared by an assessor who was not involved in setting, oral examining or marking, working to the same marking criteria as the original marker. However, the assessors do not re-mark the paper or tape, confining themselves to a report on why they consider the candidate failed a particular task and how the candidate could improve performance.

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COMPUTERS AND LANGUAGE TESTING

QM Web:
A World Wide Web Test Delivery Program

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QM Web is a suite of software from Question Mark Computing, available from Question Mark in the United Kingdom, and Assessment Systems Corporation (ASC) in the United States. It consists of a front-end objective test development package for Windows (Version 3), a Web conversion program, and a number of scripts to run tests on the World Wide Web. Versions are available for the Macintosh and DOS. Documentation, demonstration tests, and downloads of demonstration software are available at:

http://www.qmark.com/ (U.K.) and

http://www.questionmark.com/ (U.S.)

http://206.11.37.134/qmark.html/ (U.S.)

http://www.questionmark.com.au/ (Australia)

QM Designer for Windows Version 3

QM Designer is a package of three programs, the **Designer** in which you can create tests, **Presenter** for delivering tests, and **Reporter** for reviewing and analysing test results. In this review I will not deal in any detail with the latter two programs, as they are only used in test delivery by individual PC or on disk (**Presenter**), and the analysis of results from those sources (**Reporter**). However, it should be noted that Question Mark allows the free distribution of Presenter to anyone using **Designer**. Examples of tests you can take on your own individual PC after having downloaded Presenter are available from:

http://www.educ.qoteborg.se/usam/pforum/elpa/

The **Designer** is extremely user-friendly, and tests can easily be constructed by anyone with a minimum familiarity with the Windows interface. The user first specifies the nature of the feedback the test taker is to receive, and designs the final page that is shown at the end of the test. Feedback can take any form from comment on every single response (tailored to the response made) to a single test score. The construction of the final page invites the designer to design a scale, divided up in percentages, and attach descriptors to each level. The whole process is fairly intuitive, and involves little more than the ability to point and double click on a series of icons.
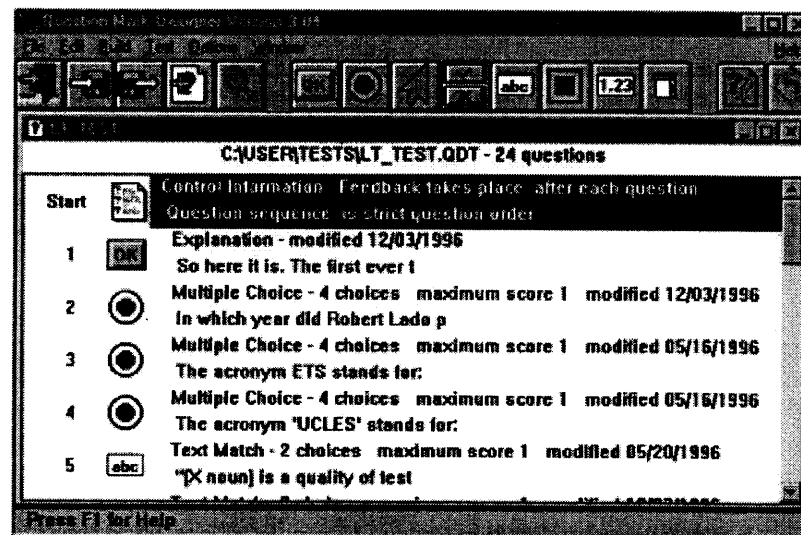
Picture from the design stage of the Language Testing Test (see Page 50)

(http://www.surrey.ac.uk/ELI/sa/lt_test.html)

Test items are added by clicking on the item icon in the menu, and items easily edited by double clicking on the item number. Inside the item editing window, a click on the right mouse button brings up a list of additional options, such as changing text type, adding feedback to particular responses, and deciding to weight items. You are also given the option of adding multimedia calls to the test presentation, including audio and video. However, multimedia calls will only work when delivering the test via the **Presenter** software. QM Web will not convert embedded multimedia when

creating tests for web delivery. In addition, although **Designer** is fully integrated with Windows in that you can import colours, text or images from any source, these features will only remain intact when using **Presenter**.

Version 3 of the software has a spell checker, and this is the only part of the program that does not work particularly well. If you do use it, make sure to save your test before starting, as the spell checker has a habit of making the system crash. I have discovered that one way around this is to check three or four questions at a time, rather than an entire test. Even so, I would advise frequent saving. I have also found that the "replace" command does not always work, so keep a record of any typos you find, and check them manually afterwards.

Allowable item types in **Designer** include multiple choice, push button, text match, multiple response, selection, numeric, open field and hot spot. However, in conversion to Web delivered tests, numeric items are the same as open field (where the correct answer must be specified precisely), and hot spot (point and click items) are not converted at all.

Further conversion losses relate to text, where fonts and symbols, colours and background colours, are ignored. Graphics are converted, however, and it is possible to include background images (wallpaper).

QM Web

The conversion to a format that can be delivered on the Web is extremely simple. The test file is loaded, and after pressing the "okay" button, QM Web produces an html file with the questions, and a map file with the answers. It also allows you to include a password if you don't want just anyone taking the test.

Other options include the creation of an answer file, in which test total scores are saved for each test taker, and a results file that contains item response data for each test taker. These files, along with the map file, are saved in secure directories on the Web server, and test takers cannot get access to them.
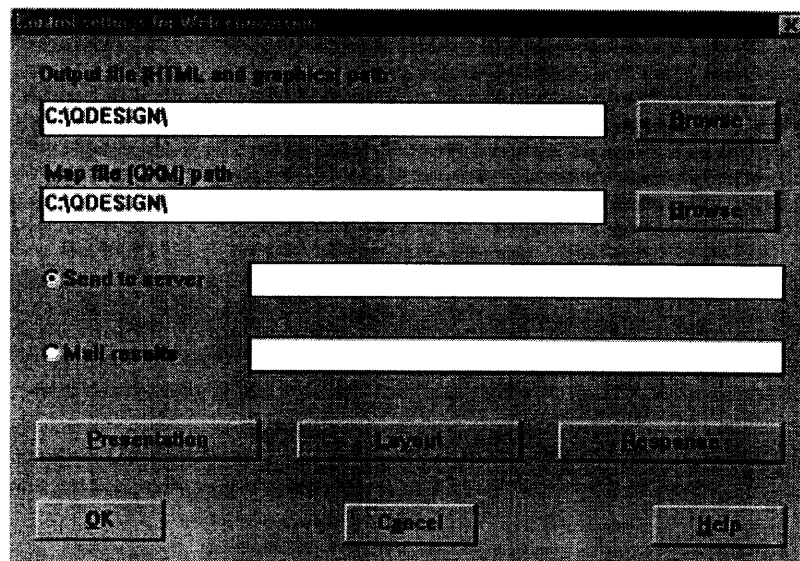
Converting tests for use on the World Wide Web using QM Web

The on-line scoring and feedback are handled by a number of programs written in Perl Script, and are relatively easy to install on the server by users with even a basic knowledge of UNIX platforms and on-line editing using the vi text editor. I have only noticed one potential problem in the directory structure handling, where the scripts appear to want the map file to be in both the secure directory, and the directory that contains the html file. I think that different parts of the program look for the map file in both of these places. However, as the map file is encrypted, this should not interfere too much with security, given that you would not want to use this system for high stakes tests anyway.

One final feature is an administration programme that allows the test designer to alter the map file, see results, and change the feedback given to test takers, through a web browser. It is possible to log onto the administration program directly from Netscape or Internet Explorer, access this information, and make immediate changes or download test scores for further analysis.

Assessment

Given the limitations imposed upon interactivity by the Web itself, QM Web is currently at the cutting edge of what can be done in terms of Internet test delivery without the use of third party plug-ins. That is, it uses what is possible within hypertext mark-up language to deliver the tests, but does not require the test taker to have additional software (other than an Internet browser) resident on his/her computer. It is possible, with a third party plug-in, such as Shockwave, to introduce hot spot or graphics based questions. But even the sophistication of these programs has not led to anything that can even remotely be considered a major departure from what is available in hypertext mark-up language. This may, of course, be more due to the limitation of the designers than the plug-ins!

Where QM Web does need considerable improvement is in the area of adaptivity. Even in its desktop version, only pre-specified branching between testlets is available. In the Web version, all test taking is linear. Further, the ability to download item level data from the results file is severely limited by the fact that it is displayed in a text editor like Notepad. Due to memory limitations in these programs, it is difficult to retrieve large data sets and export them to other programs like SPSS. The format is also rather cumbersome, and often needs considerable editing before it can be analysed in another package. These deficiencies show the need for companies producing testing software to employ testers as well as computer programmers, however good the latter may be.

Security is always a problem when sending information over the Internet, and for high stakes tests it is not yet secure enough. But for quizzes, or the integration of a self-assessment component to on-line learning exercises, you couldn't do better than QM Web at the moment.

Current prices are:

QM Designer:	£499 with a single user licence
QM Web Converter:	£199
QM Perl Scripts:	£800

At £1,498 (about $2,500 U.S.) this is a fairly expensive purchase, but it is still significantly cheaper than developing your own in-house product.