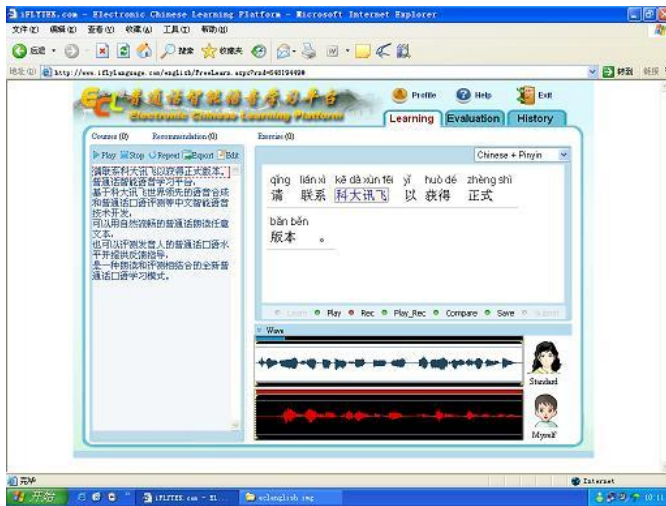


for students to use, to keep track of students' progress, to manage students' accounts, etc.

The platform is available in three models: Internet edition; LAN (local area network) edition; Desktop edition. The demo version is available at <http://www.iflylanguage.com/english>

iFLYTEK (full name is Anhui USTC iFLYTEK) is the most dominant company in Chinese speech technology area, capturing 82% of market share in China. It is the leading technology company in this domain, having won numerous awards and recognitions from Chinese government and International industry organizations. Headquartered in the city of Hefei, Anhui province, mainland China, iFLYTEK was founded in 1999 out of National Speech Technology Research Center hosted in University of Science and Technology of China (USTC). Now iFLYTEK hires 500+ employees and is having subsidiaries and branches in 15 cities in China.



Sketch Engine, a new software tool for Chinese learners: teacher and student feedback needed!

Sketch Engine (SkE) is a corpus query tool which accesses large newswire corpora in both traditional and simplified Chinese, as well as English and a number of other languages. It has already been used successfully in lexicographical applications, but not extensively as a language learning tool. Professor Chu-ren Huang of Academia Sinica gave a recent keynote speech on SkE at the ATCSL conference in Kaohsiung, and considerable interest was expressed by attendees.

Many teachers will have previously tried using corpora for class preparation, or even encouraged students to refer to them in their private study. Some teachers, how-

ever, have found concordances too unwieldy to be of use; and corpus query tools may pull up word partnerships that are not real collocations, purely because they happen to be adjacent in the text. SkE produces short summaries, Word Sketches, of how a word behaves: what its collocates are, and what contexts it appears in. This collocation information is based on the grammatical relations that obtain between words, not merely the fact that they are neighbors. Thus, given *the police were quick to arrest the five suspects*, the “arrest” word sketch shows “police” as a very salient subject collocate, and the lemma “suspect” as an object collocate, while “quick” and “five” would appear only as very low-ranking collocates.

What this means for users is that word sketches give more reliable information about usage, and that because they are quite short, they can be conveniently used in any classroom with computer and projector facilities. In the same way as you can use Google Images to flash up a picture of an object you want to describe, you can show a word sketch to give students an immediate feel for appropriate usage.

We want to make the software available to students, encourage them to use it for vocabulary work, and while reading and writing. Students are encouraged to use SkE to figure out word meanings from context, for example, rather than resorting immediately to the dictionary. Also, where memorization of vocabulary is required, SkE helps the student to see how the words really pattern. It's potentially a great learning tool, but we want to see scientific evidence of that! Our investigation will include analysis of feedback from both teachers and students, and short tests for students: one prior to participation in the project, and another after some exposure to SkE.

We've set up a Sketch Engine walkthrough, at <http://mcu.edu.tw/~ssmith/walkthrough>. Here, you are guided through the process of signing up for a username and password on the <http://www.sketchengine.co.uk> website. Then, you will be shown how to use both the English and Chinese versions of SkE (we demonstrate the English version because it's easier to show some of the more difficult concepts in a language students are more familiar with). Finally, you'll be invited to complete a questionnaire, offer any feedback you may have, and sign up for the project.

There's also some background info and further reading on the Sketch Engine site, if you're interested. If you have further questions, please write to: ssmith@mcu.edu.tw.

Sketch Engine is proprietary software, licensed by Lexical Computing Ltd, whose Director, Dr. Adam Kilgar-