

Issues in Language Instruction at the Applied English Center

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting TESL at the
University of Kansas

Special Issue: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

LIPPINCOTT HALL

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Professional Growth Opportunities:

- Submitting to ILI@AEC
- Presenting at conferences
- Submitting to other journals

Editor's Note:

Introducing a Special Issue in Computer-Assisted Language Learning at the Applied English Center

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Professional Growth Opportunities

Submitting to ILI@AEC

ILI@AEC accepts the following types of submissions:

- Commentary/Opinion Essays
- Reflective Essays
- Reviews of (Text)Book, Article, Policy, Best Practices in...
- Research Papers
- Research Agendas
- Action Research
- Materials Developed by Instructor
- Lesson Plans
- Teaching Strategies
- Proposals for Presentations and Workshops
- White Papers on ...
- Description of Classroom Practice
- Tests and other Assessments
- Descriptions of How Technology is Used in Your Class
- Statements on CALL at the AEC

If you are interested in contributing to ILI@AEC, e-mail your submission to: mberardo@ku.edu.

Presenting at Conferences

- TESOL Annual Conference: <http://www.tesol.org/convention2013>; held in March (around the 3rd week).
- MIDTESOL Annual Conference: <http://www.midtesol.org/midtesol/>; held in October (3rd or 4th week).
- NAFSA Annual Conference: http://www.nafsa.org/Attend_Events/Annual_Conference/; held last week in May.
- NAFSA Region II Conference: http://www.nafsa.org/Connect_and_Network/Engage_with_a_Community/NAFSA_Regions/Region_II/; held in October (3rd week).
- ACTFL Annual Conference: <http://www.actfl.org/convention-expo>; held in November (3rd or 4th week).
- The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA): Source for workshops, presentations, and conferences on language teaching and learning: <http://www.carla.umn.edu/>

Submitting to Other Journals

- TESOL Quarterly: <http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish>
- TESOL Journal: <http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish>
- TESOL Connections: <http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish>
- TESOL English Language Bulletin: <http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish>
- TESOL Interest Section Newsletters: <http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish>
- MIDTESOL Matters: <http://www.midtesol.org/midtesol/>
- NAFSA International Educator Magazine: http://www.nafsa.org/Learn_About_NAFSA/Staff_Directory/Feedback_Forms/Pubs/Write_for_NAFSA/
- The Language Educator: <http://www.actfl.org/publications/all>
- Foreign Language Annals: <http://www.actfl.org/publications/all>
- ELT Journal: <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/>
- Modern Language Journal: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291540-4781>
- English Language Teaching: <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt>
- Language Teaching Research: <http://ltr.sagepub.com/>
- Journal of Applied Linguistics: <https://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/JAL>
- Journal of Pragmatics: <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-pragmatics/>
- International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (IRAL): <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/iral>
- Chronicle of Higher Education: <http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5>
- Teaching and Teacher Education: <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/teaching-and-teacher-education/>
- Bilingual Research Journal: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ubjrj20/current>
- Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-9922>
- Journal of English for Academic Purposes: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/14751585>
- Applied Language Learning Journal: <http://www.dliflc.edu/publications.aspx>
- GIST Education and Learning Research Journal: <http://gisteducation.weebly.com/journal-information.html>

ILI's Editorial Advisory Board



Starting with our next issue, ILI will have our first Editorial Advisory Board. The Board consists of Liz Byleen and Sandra Issa. The primary task of the Board is to keep the quality of the content of submissions high.

After teaching for two years in Japan, Liz came to KU and received her M.A. in Education/TESL in 1986 and became an AEC Language Specialist in 1988. Over the years, she has taught every skill and every level of instruction at the AEC. In the Graduate Writing Program, she worked individually with over 100 dissertation and thesis writers from 25 university departments. In 2007, she was awarded the AEC Excellence in Teaching Award. In addition to teaching, Liz has designed courses and coordinated teachers at Levels 1, 4 and 5, specializing in reading and writing at the advanced levels and is the author of the textbook *Looking Ahead: Developing Skills for Academic Writing*. Liz has presented at TESOL conferences, contributed articles and chapters to TESOL publications and served as a conference proposal abstract reader for seven interest sections.

Sandra began working at the Applied English Center in 1997 and began her current position as a Language Specialist in 2008. She earned an M.A. in Theoretical Linguistics and another M.A. in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, both from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. She has also done extensive graduate work in the areas of applied linguistics (ABD on PhD), speech and language pathology (including clinic hours) and education (ABD on PhD). Sandra is the head of the cross-cultural counseling and advising program at the Applied English Center. In this role, she trains the counseling staff, gives presentations on cross-cultural education topics to other units on campus, and designs and presents workshops for AEC students on transitioning to the wider university, meeting academic expectations in university classes, and adjusting to a new culture. She also does administrative work, coordinates AECR 030, and coordinates many student support services.

Submission Policy

Submissions can be sent to Marcellino Berardo any time for initial comments on content. He will pass on the submission to Liz Byleen and Sandra Issa for advice on content and recommendations for the final copy. Marcellino will correspond with the author. He will also work with the author on recommended changes. The author will have the opportunity to accept recommendations or respond to the recommendations. The process is collaborative. Once we agree on the final version, it will be sent to Elizabeth Gould for copy editing, formatting, and design.

Introductory Note on this Special Issue in Computer-Assisted Language Learning at the Applied English Center



In this special issue of *ILI*, we spotlight CALL at the AEC. We do this because the AEC is particularly strong in computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Faculty members at the AEC present on CALL issues at regional (e.g., MidTESOL) and international conferences (e.g., TESOL International Association). We have faculty who are adding to their formal education through advanced graduate programs focusing on technology and language pedagogy. We also have faculty members who consistently make heavy use of computer technology in their instruction and share their insights with other AEC faculty. Some of our strength in CALL can also be attributed to our computer lab (Learning English Online-LEO), which has 21 machines and is available to AEC classes and individual students from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday. Helping LEO remain valuable and user-friendly are the dedicated faculty and student staff that work there.

We are particularly happy to publish this issue of *ILI* because we are breaking new ground by having our first invited guest editor, Summer Peixoto, who is also a contributor. Summer offers a unique perspective on CALL at the AEC because of her long-time interest in technology, recent completion of the TESOL Principles and Practices of Online Teaching program and her work as the LEO coordinator for nearly two years. She brings leadership, expertise, and enthusiasm to this special issue.

Contributors to this special issue offer opinions, evaluate software, and suggest practical, computer-based language learning activities. For more information, readers can address questions to contributors of this special issue, LEO faculty, and/or Summer Peixoto. As always, readers are invited to send commentary, concerns, omissions, and new ideas to me at mberardo@ku.edu.

Thank you,
Marcellino

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Guest Editor's Note: *My Thoughts on CALL at the AEC*

Using technology purposefully in the classroom enhances the learning experience for today's digital natives, assists the instructor in addressing 21st century learners, and engages students in taking ownership of the learning process. That being said, if technology fails, how much of this is true? In my personal experience, some of the main concerns teachers often have with using technology circle around the idea that there simply is not enough time to use, evaluate and re-think new technology. Over the last year, while teaching and training other teachers to use technology to enhance the classroom experience, I have heard countless stories of triumphs and failures. From a professional development perspective, both triumphs and failures are considered success in that growth and development are achieved through positive and negative experiences. If you are uneasy about using new technology, I would advise that you keep it simple. Be kind to yourself and initiate an uncomplicated approach in your attempt to reach a 21st century learner through dynamic, engaged instruction that uses technology as a lever, not a crutch.

There are a few technology specific programs utilized at the AEC that lend themselves to better practice. And they work. Some of the current programs utilized at the AEC for student projects and classroom enrichment featured in this special CALL issue include: Google Drive (specifically Google docs), VoiceThread, and Blackboard features. Although there are hundreds of applications, programs, and software available to use, spotlighting these three items is beneficial specifically to AEC teachers. For more information and examples, please visit our AEC Teacher Resources Blackboard, a place designed with you in mind, and follow our AEC CALL group on Facebook.

Thank you,
Summer Peixoto

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Voicethread: A Technology Tool Worth Your Time

Dawn Haverkate-Ens

Introduction

I have worked at the Applied English Center since 1991 and over that time the kinds of technology I have had access to have changed dramatically. The technology we now have access to makes teaching spoken English much easier. In the following article, I address three key questions about Voicethread and why I think it is worth learning about and using with your students. Caveats are also discussed but the drawbacks do not outweigh the benefits. In the following discussion Voicethread with a capital V refers to the program and voicethread with a small v refers to an individual voicethread that the user has created.

What is Voicethread?

Voicethread is an online sharing tool that enables users to add images, documents, and videos, and to which other users can add voice, text, audio or video comments. It is asynchronous—meaning users can access it at different times and each time they do their additions will be saved.

A voicethread can also be set up as a presentation which does not allow comments. You can post a link to the voicethread's webpage address on your Blackboard website or send an invitation to a voicethread by sending the web address via e-mail. Visually it looks like a collection of slides with images at the center of each slide. When people comment, a small icon at the edge of the slide indicates that someone has commented.

Figure 1. Screenshot of sample voicethread

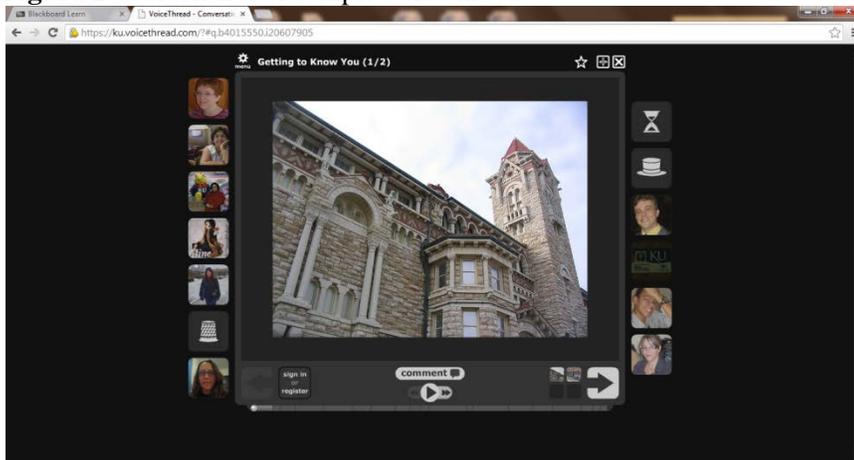


Figure 1. A screenshot view of a voicethread, which indicates slide views as well as icons of people who are able to comment on the voicethread.

A voicethread is fairly easy to create. So easy that it is possible to quickly teach students to create their own and share their creation with their teacher, their fellow students, or both and easily get written and audio feedback on what they have created. The fact that students can so easily communicate with each other in an environment that incorporates graphics means there are many potential ways Voicethread can enrich the learning experience.

Why Voicethread Is an Exciting Educational Tool

When I first understood what Voicethread could do, I was impressed. Rarely do I come across a technology tool that has such a user-friendly interface and such potential for the classroom and learning outside the classroom. When I assess any tool I want to know how much time it will take to learn to use, how accessible it will be and if my time invested in it will likely pay off. I find that Voicethread is quickly learned, highly accessible, and is well worth the time it takes to learn it.

Voicethread is cloud-based, so it is available anywhere. KU has bought licenses for all faculty and students, so it is available to everyone, and it is a tool that is being used by many universities. I believe it will have some staying power.

A voicethread has the potential of creating an online environment where real communication can take place and where the audience is anyone who visits the voicethread. If a voicethread is set up well, it can motivate participants to record thoughtful responses and craft their spoken language for a specific purpose, and since they know others (and not only their teacher) will hear them, they will be motivated to speak well.

Finally, it is fun. There is something about combining visuals and voice in this format that is inherently motivating. The way a voicethread can combine images and voices can result in a fascinating kind of virtual space that can motivate all of us to communicate. And because of its flexible format, it can be used for a variety of purposes: from formal presentations or explanations where you do not want people to comment, to spaces where the purpose is to hear everyone's reactions, such as discussions of or reactions to a topic.

There is an extensive amount of documentation on how to use Voicethread, including instructional videos and written documentation. A good place to start is the instructional voicethreads you have access to once you login to your account. KU faculty can start by logging in at <http://technology.ku.edu/voicethread>. At the end of this article you will find additional links you may find helpful.

How I Have Used Voicethread

Class Bonding

My first attempt to use Voicethread with a class was very informal. I had a very small class that bonded very well over the semester. At the end of the semester we had a dinner party at my house and I took several pictures. I made a voicethread and uploaded those pictures and some of my comments, inviting the students to add their own. It was a great way to share the pictures. Only a few people commented, but we had not used this tool during the semester so it was a bit unfamiliar to them.

Teaching Outside of Class

For my Level 3 Listening/Speaking class I created a voicethread with an explanation of the stress/intonation of compound nouns and adjective + noun combinations in English which included a final section asking the students to pronounce a list of these structures. I posted the voicethread in Blackboard so that students outside of class could review the explanation I had given in class outside of class and show me they understood by doing a recording task.

Class Bonding/Recorded Presentation

In spring 2013, I worked with a group of very experienced Brazilian English teachers and used a voicethread at the beginning of the class as a way for the teachers to introduce themselves, where they were from and their teaching situations in Brazil. I loved how after they had made these recordings, they could access the voicethread at any time to listen to their colleagues and that some of the teachers of other sections were able to listen to their recordings as well (with their permission). I also assessed some of their spoken English by creating tasks they had to complete in a voicethread. In addition, as part of their digital portfolios for the program, the teachers created a voicethread in which they answered a few questions about their lesson plans.

Facilitating Meetings

I also believe that Voicethread, used well, could facilitate interaction between teachers, making meetings more productive and making meetings possible even when it is not possible to get everyone in the same room. At the end of one semester I used Voicethread as a virtual meeting space. I first covered information everyone needed to be aware of and then asked the teachers for thoughtful feedback on a few questions related to how certain aspects of their classes went. If done well, I believe that this can result in thoughtful input for the group and more efficient use of time.

How I Hope to Use Voicethread in the Future

Fostering Discussion Skills

I would like to incorporate more Voicethread projects into my class, creating contexts in which they can contribute to meaningful discussions. The ease with which people can hear themselves and then edit their recordings makes this a powerful tool for improving their skills in this area.

Recorded Lessons/Explanations (a.k.a. Flipping the Classroom)

I would like to invest time in creating teaching presentations which I can assign students to watch outside of class. Having a bank of these kinds of lessons would make it easy to customize curriculum to meet students' needs. This would be especially useful for teaching certain aspects of pronunciation, for example, and you could ask students to record something to show they understand a concept by their production of the correct sound/intonation. Making explanation videos about presentation assignments is another possibility. I could assign the presentation and then encourage students to listen again outside of class if they need more clarification.

Student-created Presentations

I would also like to have students create a presentation in Voicethread, following my guidelines. They would then be asked to view their own and other students' presentations and ask questions/give feedback. After they had created it, they could easily share the voicethread with their parents or others via the url link.

Caveats

Voicethread can be used in so many different ways that I would guess many teachers could find ways of using it to accomplish their objectives. Like all technology, however, there is a learning curve and it takes some time to learn the program. You also need to take time to wrap your head around what it can do and think about how best to use it.

Comparing what Voicethread does with other tools we already have access to (e.g. WIMBA voiceboards in Blackboard) is a worthwhile task. If you really just want students to do simple recording at home, however, something like Voiceboards (WIMBA) may be a preferable tool.

Furthermore, creating a quality presentation in Voicethread takes some time. If you do, though, choose to invest that time in creating an instructional video presentation for your students, that presentation can be used again and again within your Blackboard course. If you think ahead, you can have your students react to the same voicethread each semester by creating a master "clean" Voicethread which you copy for use each semester.

Finally, if you choose to have your students create Voicethreads, you must really think about how much training and setup will be necessary so that all parties will be happy with the results. Even though the interface is user-friendly, students need to be trained to use it and practice using it before they are expected to create their own.

Helpful Links

Sample Voicethreads that have been used at the university level:

<http://voicethread4education.wikispaces.com/College>

Dawn's voicethread about stress in compound nouns:

<https://ku.voicethread.com/?#u2762029.b4447753.i22647320>

Good starting point for AEC faculty:

Blackboard>>AEC Teacher Technology Resources>>Voicethread

Webinar about how ESL teachers are using Voicethread including Spanish verb tense exercises and virtual writing conferences with beginning ESL writers:

Pacansky-Brock, M. (2012, 04 26). Reinventing Language Learning with Voicethread. [Webinar]. Retrieved from <http://blog.voicethread.com/webinars/reinventing-language-learning-with-voicethread/>

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Tool Tip: Using Google Docs to Encourage Collaborative Learning Outside of Class

Katie McClintic

How many times have we, as teachers, waded through a stack of grading, working to provide valuable feedback on homework assignments, only to have students give our comments a cursory glance before stuffing it into their already crammed backpacks? I have seen this time and again in my own classes, always thinking that there has to be a better, more effective way to encourage students to become more reflective about their work. I began to reflect on the assignments I was giving, and the lines of communication between teacher and student that develop through the homework. In the traditional method of pen-on-paper assignments, teachers create the activity as a way to elicit specific practice of a particular skill, opening the dialogue. Then each student completes the work and submits the assignment, thus responding to the initial questions from the teacher. The final step in this communication cycle comes with the teacher providing feedback on the student's work, thus ending the dialogue. In this structure, the student is responding only to the teacher, attempting to give the teacher the correct answer to the question.

When I compare this closed communication cycle to the open-ended, reflective style of engagement that I encourage in the classroom, it is no wonder I see such a disconnect between the two styles of communication. In the classroom, students work within a collaborative environment, experimenting with the language, listening to the experimentation of others, asking questions and hearing various explanations from their peers as well as their teacher. Students work in pairs and groups to analyze information and together with their peers produce work in which multiple students from multiple learning styles have collaborated. Not only do students have the chance to receive feedback from their teacher, they are also opening the dialogue up to multiple other information streams.

In order to more accurately replicate this type of collaborative work environment, I have been experimenting with various technology tools as a way to make homework a more collaborative experience. One tool that I have found to be especially successful is Google Docs. The idea is simple: instead of the one-student-one-paper model I have relied on in the past, I have implemented a one-paper-many-collaborators approach. Not only are students contributing their answers to the questions posed in the assignment, they can also see the work of their classmates. This offers students the opportunity to measure their own understanding of the questions with that of their peers. It also provides motivation for students to "up their game" in terms of critical thinking and creating high-level, academic work.

Sample Lesson

I used the following lesson in a recent level 4 grammar class.

Step 1

In-class: Students worked in groups to practice the target grammar structure by comparing universities of their choice from the following website: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/compare-colleges>. We then discussed as a class students' own reasons for choosing to come to KU.

Step 2

Out-of-class: Students were asked to come up with a list of questions for an interview they would be conducting with KU students about why they chose KU. Students were asked to create questions with different structures according to the corresponding charts in their book.

Rather than have the students do the assignment individually, they were asked to type their questions into the group document found at this link: <http://goo.gl/5Aj80w>.

Students were not required to write their name, but I did ask each student to write his or her responses in a different color. Although the document can be accessed and edited from the web, only those with the link can access it. In other words, it is neither public nor searchable on the web.

Step 3

In-class: Students accessed the group sheet, now filled with the student-created questions. They were then given a set of criteria with which to evaluate each question:

- Is the question grammatically correct?

- Does the structure of the question match the example from the chart?
- Does the question fit the context of the assignment?
- Is the content/structure of the question academically appropriate?

Once students had evaluated the questions based on the criteria, we discussed which questions best fit all four. With a little tweaking of the grammar, these became the questions we chose to use for the next step of the assignment, the interview.

Follow-up Activity

For the final step, students used the questions to interview two American KU students and write down the responses. Students used the responses in the following class to write a short comparison essay (again focusing on the target grammar) based on the results of their interview.

Results

This activity worked especially well due to the wide variety of L1 speakers represented in the class (Portuguese, Chinese, French, and Arabic) and the variation of skill level within the class. Lower level students could see solid examples of the type of language expected of them in an advanced grammar course, while the higher level students had the opportunity to analyze and provide explanation of grammatical structures. All students had the opportunity to revise and edit the grammar in order to express the ideas in a clearer, more concise way. Now that students understand this collaborative homework process, I hope to incorporate this approach more as the semester progresses. My overall goal is to help each student in the class become more reflective in terms of their writing and grammar. My secondary goal, however, is to see fewer comments tossed aside by students into the endless abyss of their backpacks.

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Using Gradebook in Blackboard

Samantha Parkes

I do not use technology in my classes for technology's sake. I am not that gifted with computers and some things that are intuitive to others are a mystery to me. However, if I think it will make my life easier and help me become a more transparent teacher, then I will do my best to figure out new programs and devices. This is how I came to use the Gradebook feature of Blackboard in my classes and why I believe it has not only helped me to adapt to the AEC's grading system, but also has helped my students take a more active role in their own success in my courses.

Background

I was first exposed to Blackboard as an MA student and teacher at American University. Many of my professors used it to post our grades on papers, participation, and other assignments such as journals. I also taught a writing course for international graduate students and I posted their grades on Blackboard, just like the other professors. It was fairly simple because my course only had a few assignments and each one was worth a certain percentage of the overall grade.

Here is what the grade distribution looked like for my Academic Writing for International Graduate Students course at American University:

- Literature Review 10%
- Major paper 25%
- Reflection Paper 10%
- Analytic Paper 10%
- Action Plan 10%
- Support System Paper 10%
- Participation 25% (punctuality, attendance, class participation, and in- class writing)

I could easily make a column for each assignment and weigh it for the percentage it represented in the course. This course was structured so that there were few assignments and I could easily check my math.

When I came to KU after spending an academic year in Nicaragua, I had very little time to wrap my brain around my own course material let alone put any grades into Blackboard. I kept track of all of my grades in a little book that I purchased with grid lines on it. I added the students' names and then each assignment with their score by hand. Then, at the end of the semester, I highlighted the in-class assignments in pink and the homework assignments in yellow and used a ruler to help me calculate the total points for each category.

After that, I had to meticulously add up the number of points for each student and divide by the total, and that is how I got the in-class and homework grades. Finally, I had to average those two grades to get the final grade. Looking back, I can now see several problems with this system:

Accuracy issues: I was constantly worried I had added up my grades incorrectly. What if the ruler slipped and I mixed up two students' scores? What if I typed incorrectly into the calculator? The possibility of human error was always nagging at my conscience. I double and sometimes triple checked my math to make sure I was giving students the correct grades. Of course, there was always a possibility that I had written down the wrong score to begin with.

Lack of transparency: Here I was, having just spent a year in Nicaragua teaching teachers to design clear prompts with clear evaluation criteria (see Parkes, 2013), and yet my students in the US did not know how their grades were being figured or even if they had been calculated correctly. I told them what their grade was for midterm, but they had no idea what their grades were throughout the semester. This led to problem 3.

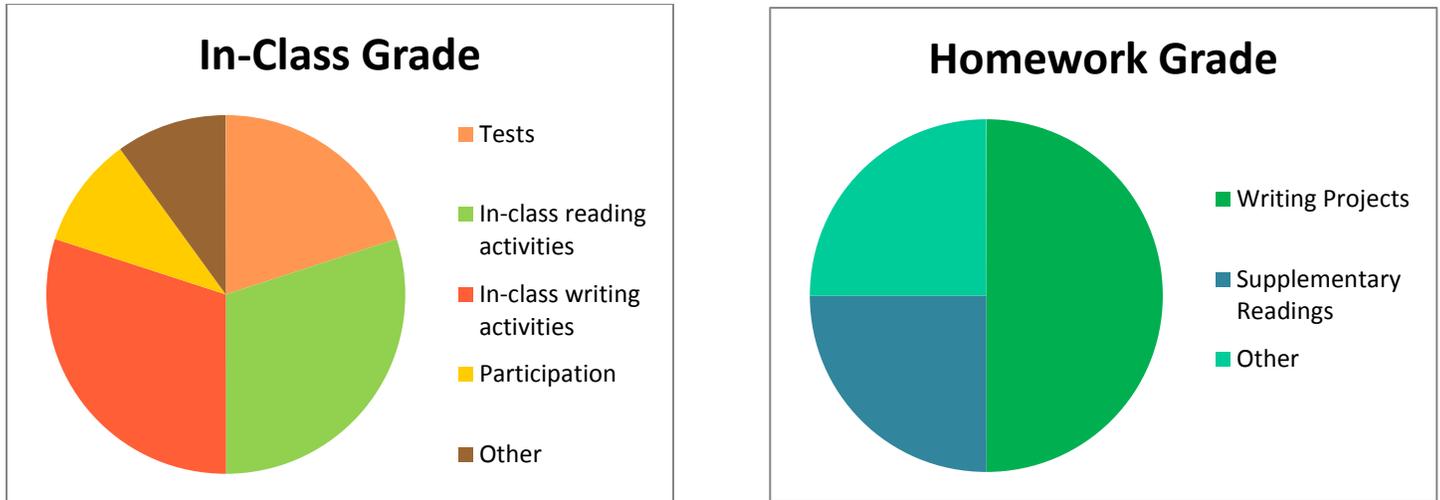
Complaining about grades/Bargaining for higher grades: I found that students who do not know how they are doing are either blissfully unaware, or believe that they have the right to ask for a higher grade at the end of the semester. Whether this is sound logic on their part is not really the point because at some level, students have to be responsible for their grades in class and on homework, but I feel as though they have a right to know how they are doing at any point during the course. If they do not know what their grades are throughout the semester, and do not know how these grades are being calculated, how can I expect them to *not* challenge me at the end of the semester?

Wasted Time: Not only did my pen and paper system make me second guess my math skills, it also took up a lot of time and as I discovered, grades are due very soon after the last day of class. There is often not enough time at the end of the semester to get all the grading done, let alone sit around highlighting and calculating grades by hand with a calculator and pencil.

Discovery Process

After trudging through my low tech grading process for a semester, I decided that something had to change and I knew I wanted to take advantage of the systems already set in place for me to use: namely Blackboard. At our Reading/Writing Level 3 launch meeting in spring 2013, our coordinator, Sandra Issa, gave us a breakdown of how she wanted the grades to be handled.

Figure 1. Grading Distribution for 034 Reading/Writing Spring 2013



In-Class Grade	Homework
20% <i>Tests</i>	50% <i>Writing projects</i>
30% <i>In-class reading activities</i>	25% <i>Supplementary readings</i>
30% <i>In-class writing activities</i>	25% <i>Other</i>
10% <i>Participation</i>	
10% <i>Other</i>	

Figure 1. Grade breakdown for Level 3 Reading/Writing. Grades are separated into in-class versus homework grades and the pie charts provide a visual representation of the grade distribution of various aspects of each portion of the grade.

I knew that I could enter grades into Blackboard using columns, but I was not sure how to set them up so they were weighted correctly. How could I get 50% of the grade to be homework and the other 50% to be in-class? Then, I needed to make it so that 30% of the in-class work had to be reading activities, and so on. I went to my computer and played around with my course a little. Then, I talked with others whom I knew to be great techno wizzes. After figuring out a framework for how to enter the grades, I called the Blackboard support people and explained to them what I was trying to do and how I thought I could do it. They assured me that I was on the right track and so I went about setting up my Gradebook. For my AECR-030 class, I used the categories I was given: Tests, In-Class Reading Activities, In-Class Writing Activities, Participation, In-Class Other, Writing Projects, Supplementary Readings, and Homework Other. Then, I set up a weighted column titled “In-Class” and filled it with those appropriate categories and their respective percentages (i.e. In-Class Reading=30%). Next, I set up a weighted column titled “Homework” and filled it with the homework categories and percentages (i.e. Writing Projects=50%). Last, I created another weighted column titled “Weighted Total” that would average the two other weighted columns: In-Class and Homework.

Setting up your Gradebook may seem daunting, but once you figure out what *kinds* of assignments you will have for the class, (these become your categories in Blackboard) it is very easy and takes about five minutes. After you have laid a foundation, go about the business of entering assignments and grades throughout the semester. It can be updated whenever the instructor decides to enter grades. I entered scores as I graded assignments, but others may choose to do it once a week or whatever works best for the instructor and the course.

Suggestions

If you plan on updating your grades throughout the semester, I suggest teaching your students how to check their grades on Blackboard and asking them periodically to check and make sure everything looks correct. It is possible to enter something incorrectly or even forget to enter a grade, but diligent students will most likely notice this and let you know. This puts the onus on the students to be aware of how they are doing throughout the semester and will cut down on those awkward conversations at the end of the semester where students complain about their grades and offer to do any amount of extra credit to raise their grade because if executed properly, they will know what their in-class grade is and what their homework grade is already. Their grade will go up as they complete assignments successfully and it will go down if they miss an assignment or fail to perform well on exams. If they miss an assignment, they do not need to consult with the teacher, (“Teacher, did I miss anything important?”). They can simply look on Blackboard to see what the assignment is and how many points it is worth. The onus is on them to make up the work.

Most importantly, with this level of transparency, students will be able to diagnose their own strengths and weaknesses and have a better idea of what aspects of the course they need to improve. They might learn that doing well on tests, but not turning in homework results in a lackluster final grade. In addition, having a broad perspective of a student’s performance in the course will give the instructor valuable information to use when conducting midterm conferences and preparing students’ final grades. The information provided in the Gradebook will help students set realistic goals and the instructor can easily monitor students’ progress.

Possible Drawbacks

Even though this system has been effective for me, it may not be helpful for all teachers and situations. As with every system, program, or new piece of technology, there could be drawbacks. One of these is that it requires some time (and thought) to set up at the beginning of the semester. This most likely is not a problem for those of us teaching courses that have established curricula, or that we have taught before. However, if you are experimenting with a new course, and plan to flesh out the balance of points throughout the course of the semester, it might make it difficult to set up your gradebook. While Blackboard makes it easy to change percentages and points at any time, it might confuse your students if you have to make major adjustments in the middle of the semester.

Using this system also requires a fair amount of data entry throughout the semester so that students can see how various assignments affect their grades. This can be time consuming and there is also the potential to enter the wrong grade for the wrong student. However, I have found that if this occurs, students are all too happy to correct you.

Ultimately, there is a learning curve when working with new technology that requires time and patience. There is also the potential for technical issues beyond our control to corrupt or delete work. Printing off a report of the grades periodically is an insurance policy against potential technical issues, if one remembers to do it.

Conclusions

In the end, using the Gradebook function of Blackboard has made my life easier. I spend less time figuring grades and worrying if I have properly weighted each assignment. I can easily set standards for success in my courses and students always know where they stand. I am responsible for grading assignments and posting the grades in a timely manner, and they are responsible for making sure everything has been entered correctly and for improving their scores in the aspects where their performance is weak. In the end, we have become responsible to each other. Ultimately, I feel as though my students will be better prepared to succeed in their future courses at the AEC and beyond.

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Learning English Online: Endless Discovery

Summer Peixoto

Introduction

Keeping up with current trends and new developments in the realm of Computer-assisted Language Learning often invokes two opposite reactions. For those who juggle multiple projects, it may often seem like an arduous task with no clear, direct and visible benefit. “Why do I need to do this” might become a repeated mantra. For others, pursuing technology advancements may seem to be like it is simply part of the process; professional development is a teaching necessity. For teachers working in our Learning English Online lab (LEO), the pursuit of new technologies, knowledge, and professional development is a never ending, often curious and surprising, process of discovery.

LEO’s Purpose and Vision

LEO provides faculty with insight into various uses and best practices of technology for language learning and teaching purposes. LEO plays a centralized, integral role in faculty and student lives. Whether or not using technology really assists in moving students through the program quickly is a moot point. Our focus is teaching academic skills and efficient, effective learning habits that will create momentum to assist students in acclimating to academic life.

Our vision is to support instructors in pursuit of technology developments, both in and out of the classroom, and also support students in the use of technology to accomplish classroom objectives. These categories range from Blackboard use and support to inspiring technology use in all aspects of teaching and learning. We can expand on the categories by looking at them from both the instructor and student perspective.

LEO and AEC Faculty

Instructors need Blackboard support. Our LEO group is skilled in providing general review sessions, gradebook set-up sessions, test and quiz functionality, and assignment features specific to AEC needs. Because LEO faculty use Blackboard regularly, their expertise and knowledge are invaluable to those who are new to using Blackboard on a regular basis. LEO faculty have also worked to create an outstanding resource site within Blackboard (AEC Technology Resources) which includes information on Blackboard, VoiceThread, and other Web 2.0 tools. At this site, AEC instructors can also find examples and lesson plans to help inspire creativity.

LEO faculty are constantly engaging in the use of technology for classroom use. They are able and willing to share technology options for student and teacher projects. Our specialized team can work with AEC faculty to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using more technology in class. Our hope is to inspire and motivate faculty to pursue technology goals. By working together and creating learning communities, faculty members are able to motivate each other to work toward adding technology elements in the classroom.

We encourage LEO faculty to take on leadership roles. LEO faculty lead by (a) creating directions for using software, (b) experimenting and becoming proficient with Blackboard functionality, (c) attending CALL workshops and gathering resources, (d) developing websites and using new, current and relevant technology tools, (e) exploring the purposeful use of technology, and (f) working to provide faculty with the tools, know-how, and opportunities to pursue CALL developments.

LEO and AEC Students

On a regular basis, LEO faculty work with teachers and students in the LEO lab, a place designated for AEC students only. Our ultimate goal is to provide a place for optimized productivity that offers a comfortable learning environment where students can ask for technology assistance when necessary. Students can check email, write reports, record oral summaries, create presentations, and collaborate with one another while working in the lab. Although student technology skills may be advanced when it comes to using a smart phone or “gaming,” there is often an academic skill lacking, whether it be sending teachers email or saving a file with an appropriate file name. Currently, LEO faculty are working on short demonstrations and accompanying videos to allow students to practice these basic academic skills autonomously.

Working with students in LEO helps us achieve our AEC mission, which is “...preparing our students linguistically, academically and culturally for university life, providing services to enhance their adjustment and achievement, and advocating for ESL and international students.” We help prepare students academically by (a) modeling formatting, (b)

helping with email set up, (c) assisting with technology questions and creations, (d) navigating software programs and on-line textbook supplements related to AEC courses, (e) facilitating typing courses, and (f) offering independent programs that allow for accent reduction and self-study in order to make student adjustment to college life achievable. Clearly, LEO plays an important role in fulfilling the AEC mission statement with respect to technology issues.

Conclusion

Computer-assisted language learning is only going to increase over time. LEO's role in both student and teacher interactions will continue to increase in importance and need, but does using more technology in LEO make you a better teacher? Probably not, but fine-tuning teaching skills, learning how to address the 21st century learner, and changing pedagogy to account for more active learning and engaging moments, most certainly will. There is nothing wrong with using pen and paper, overheads, and textbooks. A good teacher will know how to use any tool and make it work, but technology that LEO offers can be a powerful tool. Join us in our pursuit of developing solid, purposeful technology practices.

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On Computer-Assisted Language Learning and the AEC

Marcellino Berardo

Introduction

In this essay I add to the discussion on CALL, LEO, and technology use at the AEC. I begin with a brief discussion of CALL and LEO and then survey issues and challenges relevant to the broader field of computer-assisted language learning. Before I conclude with some additional uses of CALL-related technology at the AEC, I offer the beginnings of a pedagogical agenda for the AEC that incorporates CALL.

CALL and LEO

To survey CALL resources at the AEC, we can start with our computer lab, Learning English Online (LEO). A brief look at the LEO website, <http://www.aec.ku.edu/leo-lab>, shows a number of resources and activities LEO makes available to faculty and students. Among the online resources are links to Dave's ESL Café, NPR.org, and TED talks. There are also links to "over 1,000 quizzes, tests, exercises, and puzzles..." (<http://www.aec.ku.edu/leo-lab>). LEO offers support for cloud based educational programs such as online dictionaries and grammar guides and ESL software such as My English Lab from the textbook Focus on Grammar. Students can record themselves in LEO or use the computers to write papers, check email, or work on typing skills.

Faculty members working in LEO are skilled users of technology and are among the most knowledgeable or tech savvy at the AEC. The following AEC faculty members were assigned percentages to work in LEO this semester: Sam Billen, John Hestand, Katie McClintic, Monica McCuiston, Sam Parkes, and Joshua Shireman. LEO faculty members have different strengths and, as a team, can address most questions or find out the answers. The team offers numerous workshops and other opportunities for AEC faculty to sharpen their skills on widely used instructional software (e.g., Blackboard) as well as software specifically designed for language teaching and learning. Supported by six student assistants, the LEO team is also prepared to help students with questions about software, hardware, or other related concerns.

Survey of Issues and Challenges in CALL

To survey issues and challenges in the field of CALL, I turn to a recent Modern Language Journal Special Focus on CALL. In particular, Garrett (2009) discussed trends and issues that have changed over the years and new trends and issues facing CALL today. Over the years, CALL has gone through changes in "the relationship between pedagogy, theory, and technology, physical infrastructure, efficacy, copyright concerns, categories of software (e.g., tutorial, authentic materials engagement, communication uses of technology), and evaluation" (p. 719). One challenge in CALL we face today requires us to rethink grammar instruction based on recent advances in functional and meaning-based analyses of grammar (pp. 730-731). Another challenge we face would be technologies and materials necessary to online learning (pp. 731-732). Two additional CALL issues are (1) the use of computer-mediated communication (social computing) and (2) teacher training and professional development (pp. 732-733).

Garrett (2009) brings up research agendas, specifically relating CALL and SLA theory (pp. 733-734).¹ Garrett goes on to make an appeal for more "research that evaluates current CALL practice...[and] also research that opens up radically new approaches to language teaching and learning..."(pp. 733-734). Noting that we already have some understanding of "sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse aspects of CALL" (p. 734), Garrett adds that a psycholinguistic approach to instructed SLA should be explored in the context of CALL research. Also appropriate to a CALL research agenda are in-depth case studies on individual learners and their use of technology to learn a second language.

Garrett (2009) adds that we should continue to develop professional organizations such as the Computer-assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) and the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) (p. 735). I interpret Garrett's self-acknowledged controversial suggestion that these two organizations merge, as one way to develop professional organizations. Of course joining and contributing to a CALL professional organization also helps with the development of the profession as well as one's personal professional development.

¹ Also see Chapelle (2009) in the same volume of the Modern Language Journal for more on CALL and SLA theory.

Toward a Pedagogical Agenda for CALL at the AEC

A central question to consider at the AEC is whether we can articulate a pedagogical agenda that utilizes CALL in ways that keep our Center effective, flexible, nimble and moving students to their academic program as efficiently as possible. To this end, we can focus on assessment and instruction. We might start with a new kind of proficiency test that does more than assess a student's proficiency. Test results might also detail specific outcomes students have met or still need to meet. The test would then automatically place students in the appropriate levels and classes. Students might also get a print out of their weaknesses along with a list of specific videos and activities that they can access on the AEC home page to help them improve in the relevant skills, grammar, and vocabulary.

A more ambitious project would be to team up with KU Core (general education) instructors who make heavy use of computer-assisted instruction in their courses. We could amend their videos and PowerPoints and create EAP materials out of them. For example, we could enrich videos with closed caption and dialog pop up boxes and other devices which correspond to Bhatia's (1983; 1993) concept of easification.² The idea is that we can use computer technology to provide students with the language and academic culture they need to understand content in their classes directly without the option of simplifying authentic materials or offering conventional ESL skill-based classes. I would predict that ESL materials we might create would also be welcomed by native speakers of English.

Many reasons come to mind for not thinking beyond instructional software (e.g., Blackboard, FOG, etc.), CALL workshops, and activities (quizzes, games, etc.). For example, the two suggestions mentioned above would take much time, effort, and expertise to accomplish. There are also questions about how much money in terms of percentage should be allotted to these activities and how much help Bhatia's (1983; 1993) easification (and other) devices can really offer students at the lower levels. These kinds of questions are appropriate and should be asked. Questions and answers, however, should keep moving us forward and never paralyze progress.

As we interpret our profession, we must insist on maximizing our efficiency and effectiveness, two goals that computer technology is specifically designed to achieve. Computer technology should help us adjust our practice and instruction to be most practical and most directly relevant to the KU academic environment and help us accomplish the most efficient and effective way to reach the goals and objectives we set. This will require us to revisit our goals regularly, ask the hard questions, and be free to adjust instruction, and/or materials, and/or program organization, and/or internal bureaucracy accordingly. The result is an effective, flexible, nimble, and technology-informed AEC that moves students most efficiently to the next level of proficiency they need to be successful in their academic program. The constant advancing nature of CALL is ideally suited to help us maintain this kind of progress.

Some Additional Uses of CALL-related Technology at the AEC

There are additional uses of technology at the AEC for us to consider. Technology will be helpful in tracking the academic records of students who are concurrently enrolled in ESL and non-ESL courses as well as former AEC students who take English 101. This kind of data collection can help us find out how successful our instruction and proficiency assessments are. Computer technology can also help determine the kind of academic English our students need in order to be ready for their academic program. For example, we can develop a KU corpus of academic English or run analyses on other corpora of academic English and use our findings to enrich the AEC's curriculum and assessments. Administrative technology will be useful to enroll students and help with section changes, late enrollment, and withdrawals. Such technology can also facilitate counseling appointments and help us get rid of bulky and inefficient paper files. As our new database goes online, we may be able address some of these broader uses of technology at the AEC.

Conclusion

The AEC has a strong foundation in CALL. LEO, LEO faculty, and other interested AEC faculty are leading the way in using computer technology in instruction. Computer technology is immensely powerful and should also be used to help us think past instructional software and activities to articulate a central role for CALL in our pedagogy. Steps toward increasing technology's influence at the AEC include the creation of EAP materials in conjunction with colleagues who teach KU Core classes, the development of a new proficiency test that automatically places students, and research that is

² "Easification" is the process of rendering a text more accessible to non-native speakers by keeping the integrity and authenticity of the text. This is in contrast to "simplification" which can include changes in vocabulary, grammar, organization, and content to an original text. For more on differences between simplified and authentic texts see Crossley, et al. (2007).

aimed at determining the kind of academic English we should teach at KU and level of proficiency our students need to reach in order to be successful in their academic program.

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A Call for Book Reviews

ILI is looking to publish book reviews on any topic our faculty members are professionally interested in. Reviews of textbooks for particular courses are welcome.

We are especially eager to publish book reviews from books in the AEC library in Mark Algren's office, 204a Lippincott. The AEC library has over 180 book titles to choose from.

Please go to the [AEC homepage](#), scroll down and click on *AEC internal* to find a comprehensive list of books in the AEC library. Please send book reviews or inquiries to Marcellino Berardo at mberardo@ku.edu.

Some Book Topics in the AEC Library

1. Technology
2. Academic Success
3. Grammar, Teaching the Four Skills
4. Teaching English for Academic Purposes, Content-based Instruction
5. Curriculum, Course Design, Assessment
6. Classroom Observations
7. Vocabulary
8. Culture Shock, Accounts of Different Cultures
9. Discourse analysis, Research methods
10. Higher education

Some Book Titles in the AEC Library

1. American Ways, A Guide for Foreigners in the US
2. Beijing (Lonely Planet)
3. Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition
4. EAP Essential: A Teacher's Guide to Principles and Practice
5. English Essentials - What Everyone Needs to Know about Grammar, Punctuation, and Usage
6. English Vocabulary for Academic Success – Practicing Academic English Words and Grammar
7. With Respect to the Japanese
8. Input-based Incremental Vocabulary Instruction
9. Islam and Muslims
10. Listening in the Language Classroom (Cambridge Language Teaching Library)
11. New Ways in Content-based Instruction and New Ways in Teaching Reading
12. Pedagogy of the Oppressed
13. Teaching Academic ESL Writing
14. Teaching Language: From Grammar to Gramming
15. Teaching Language in Context: Proficiency-Oriented Instruction
16. TESOL Technology Standards – Description, Implementation, Integration
17. The Power of CALL
18. University language – A Corpus-based Study of Spoken and Written Registers
19. Using Textbooks Effectively
20. Working with International Students and Scholars on American Campuses

Book Checkout Policy

A checkout sheet is available in Kari Balthazor's office just outside of 204a. When checking out a book, please write your name and checkout date next to the book title on the checkout sheet, which is available on the tall filing cabinet in the back of Kari's office. Finally, when you are done with the book, please return it and note the return date on the checkout sheet.

Service Opportunity

The AEC is looking for someone to record the author names and publication dates for many of the books in the library. At this point the books are recorded and organized by book title. Volunteers with suggestions for alternative ways to organize the library are also welcome. Please talk to Kari Balthazor if interested.

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