Learning English Online: Endless Discovery
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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 Backboard 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.