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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

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The summer issue of *Teaching English with Technology* provides all the readers with an interesting mix of ideas to reflect upon during the holiday. Some of the contributions touch upon issues that have already been addressed to a certain extent, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), while others expand significantly upon the previously published ideas (an article on Communities of Practice). Finally, it is really great pleasure to host articles on the topics already unexplored in the Journal, even despite its five-year existence. In this issue such a topic is electronic portfolio, efolio for short, and its practical implementation in the academic setting. Thus, the highly diversified blend of ideas covered should satisfy both the needs of experienced CALL teachers as well as newbies.

The opening article "Electronic Portfolios and Literacy Development: A Course Design for EFL University Students" by **Yuh-Mei Chen** (Taiwan), provides a highly informative overview of the theory and practice of the implementation of electronic portfolio in the EAP setting.

In the Internet Lesson Plans section, **Aiden Yeh** (also Taiwan), a well-known member of Webheads in Action group, gives the ready-made lesson outline of a blended learning activity exploiting the idea of chat to promote the development of all four language skills.

Dafne Gonzalez (Venezuela) and Teresa Almeida d'Eça (Portugal), also active members of Webheads in Action and the authors of the contribution in "On the Web" section, provide a detailed description of how an online workshop called "Becoming a Webhead" was created, run and evaluated.

"Making Our Lives Easier: Using Free Learning Management Systems in the ESL Environment", the final contribution in the issue, was written by **Stephan Langdon** and **Josephine Taylor** (both from Colombia). The authors review a few different Learning Management Systems, pointing out to their advantages and limitations in the foreign language teaching context.

It is hoped that this mix of ideas and views will stimulate the readers to their own online or blended endeavours.

I wish you good reading.

ARTICLE

ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT:

A COURSE DESIGN FOR EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate whether and how students change in writing and learning by constructing electronic portfolios in an English composition class. The course of English composition was conducted within a web-course system developed by National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan. The study found that significantly students favored the course design of electronic portfolios and considered it conducive to their writing and learning. Such a composition course that infuses the electronic portfolio was regarded as advantageous for being convenient and flexible, promoting autonomous learning, involving frequent writing and reading, enhancing critical reading and writing skills, fostering information literacy, and cultivating ownership and authorship. Not only students' changes in learning attitude as well as concepts of writing were observed, but also their writing was found significantly better in quantity and accuracy. Challenges encountered were mainly related to computer networking, students' preference of classroom interaction and test administration, and assessment of electronic writing. The study suggests that electronic composition classrooms should blend into course design components such as scaffolding information literacy, teacher-fronted instruction and writing conferences, paper testing, and discussions of e-literacy and integration of verbal and visual rhetoric.

Introduction

Literature abounds in discussions of portfolios as a potent device in teaching and learning writing. The use of portfolios especially embraces several benefits. First, portfolios can display students' growth in writing over a period of time (Hamp-Lyons, 1994; Herter, 1991). Second, portfolios which contain several samples written under different conditions provide a more comprehensive picture of students' competence to the teacher (Hamp-Lyons, 1994; Herter, 1991). Third, a portfolio approach to writing shares the values of the process classroom and provides students with opportunities to revise and ask for help (Hamp-Lyons, 1994). Fourth, when managing their portfolios, students become active in and responsible for their learning and develop a sense of ownership (Gottlieb, 1995; Newman & Smolen, 1993; Vacca & Vacca, 1993; Valencia, 1990). Most important of all, by constructing writing portfolios, students are empowered to see themselves learning as writers, not as required for grades (Chen, 2000).

Electronic portfolios, a pedagogical practice allowed by the infusion of technology into the classroom, are like paper portfolios used to profile and document students' learning and growth over time. They also serve as an effective device to interweave assessment with teaching, but they maintain all the benefits of paper portfolios and exceed them in such aspects as display flexibility, minimal storage space, easiness to backup and upgrade, long shelf life, portability, accessibility etc. (Barrett, 2001).

In addition, electronic portfolios can be more meaningful than paper portfolios for students in terms of writing motive and audience. The constructing process creates a supportive writing community beyond classroom, sharpens students' technology skills, and eventually, accentuates their sense of achievement. Wall & Peltier noted that by "going public" with electronic portfolios their students "transformed their school-bound ideas of audience, fostered their own sense of community extending beyond the classroom, and renegotiated the traditional terms of ownership of student writing" (1996: 207). Phinney (1996) found that her students who chose to do electronic papers with hypertexts enjoyed the task immensely and many appeared to be more involved in their work.

The term "electronic portfolio" varies in definitions. It may refer to "digital portfolio," which contains the artifacts transformed into computer-readable form, saved on a disk or a CD-ROM, and is usually confined to a single computer, such as Campbell's CD portfolios (1996).

Or, it can be a learning support system like efolios of Pullman (2002), or software tools built into existing campus information systems. Another perception of "electronic portfolio" indicates a set of student-generated hypertexts accessible through the Internet like the one described in Watkins (1996). Varied definitions are like what Yancey (1996) stated, "designed for a specific population…[and] local in their application" (p. 132) and imply distinct uses.

Applications of electronic portfolios in Taiwan have shown great promise. Chang and Tung (2000) and Yue and Wang (2000) developed web-based learning support systems as electronic portfolios. Although the portfolio systems were considered beneficial to learning, students, not authorized to compile and manage their work at their will, did not have the "proprietorship" as Purves (1996) claimed. In addition, the learning subjects are related to web-based learning and in the Chinese context not specific to English learning. Given the scarcity of our knowledge about the use of electronic portfolios in English learning in general and writing instruction in particular, it is worth inquiring how electronic portfolios promote student learning in the composition classroom, especially in the context where English is spoken as a foreign language (EFL).

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Twenty English majors of National Chung Cheng University participated in this study. Some students created paper portfolios before, and their computer literacy and skills varied. Most students were familiar with the webcourse system and equipped with some basic technology skills.

2.2. WebCourse System

The English composition course was conducted within a webcourse system developed by National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan. The system encompasses valuable features such as Announcement, Course Information, Courseware, Homework & Quiz, Discussion, and Tools. When students log into the course page, they are first informed of what they need to do for the course. Then they can follow the course schedule, browsing the course materials,

posting articles at specified forums, turning in assignments, and/or doing the online tests/exercises. Figure 1 presents the introductory page of the course.

Figure 1. Introductory page (course announcement)

2.3. Design of E-Portfolio Writing Curriculum

This composition course includes several indispensable components:

(1) four learning dimensions: cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and social;

(2) three evaluation formats: teacher, self, and peer evaluation to demonstrate power and authority being shared in the classroom;

(3) electronic learning media: students need to have access to computers, world wide web, and multimedia tools to produce electronic portfolios.

The goals of the curriculum are to help students: develop writing skills necessary for varied language functions, reflect on their writing development, become active in and responsible for their learning, appreciate collaboration with others, think, read, and write critically, write with appropriate English structures and written expressions, and display skills of electronic writing (mastery of the software tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint and FrontPage, or Macromedia DreamWeaver, etc.).

The course itself can be considered transitional from paper-based to electronic-based. During teacher-student conferences, students still turned in drafts in hard copies. Otherwise, they posted journals and responses, shared drafts and review comments, turned in peer and self evaluations, and showcased portfolios electronically. The course design stresses both writing process and product by double assessing portfolio contents. To highlight the importance of revisions, students' composition drafts are read and graded as works in progress with grades provisional and revisable along the processes. Portfolios, though presented as products of students' efforts, are not the only thing graded in the course. The final grade is based on students' performances in web-posting, peer reviewing, revising, timed writing, masterpiece/portfolio sharing as well as on online grammar exercises and writing tests. Table 1 outlines the course design. Figure 2 shows assessment results (percentage, grade, and rank in class) displayed by the webcourse system. Figure 3 presents a student's working portfolio.

Domain	Required Learning Task	Task Specification	AssessmentFormat	Portfolio Content	Presentation Mode	Weight
Cognitive, Affective, Social, & Meta-cognitive	Journals/Web Postings	Keep at least ten journal entries or responses (more than 120 words) posted in different weeks	Teacher, peer, & self assessments	Selected journal entries and responses	Electronic-based	10% (ten entries getting ten points; bonus credits given to more entries
Cognitive	Compositions	Write different genres (narrative, expository, procedural, etc.)	Teacher assessments	Drafts (first and final)	Electronic and paper-based	20% (based on content, organization, grammar, wording, and mechanics)
Cognitive, Affective, Social, Meta-cognitive	Review	Review peers' drafts	Teacher assessment	Review feedback to compositions	Electronic and paper-based	20% (specific & constructive feedback)

Cognitive	Online Grammar Exercise	Practice weekly (true-or-false, blank-fillings, multiple choice items)	Teacher assessment	List of scores and self-reflection	Electronic-based	10%
Cognitive	Writing Test	Two tests on grammar and discourse (rational cloze and paragraph discourse test) during mid-term and final weeks	Teacher assessment	Reflection sheet	Paper-based	5-10%
Cognitive	Timed Writing	Two timed writings at the beginning and end of semester	Teacher assessment	Timed writing print outs	Paper and electronic based	10%
Cognitive, and Meta-cognitive	Sharing masterpiece (1st semester) Portfolio (2nd semester)	Online presentation and evaluation	Teacher, peer, & self assessments	Hyperlinks to writing selection and reflection	Electronic based	15-20% (based on reflection, language, organization design and structure)
Cognitive, Social, and Meta-cognitive	Peer and Self Evaluation	Evaluation of peer and self performances in drafting and reviewing	Peer and self assessments	Peer and self-evaluation sheets	Electronic-based	5-10% (based on helpfulness, dutifulness, participation, and attitude)

Table 1. Design of E-portfolio Writing Curriculum

Figure 2. Assessment results (percentage, grade, and rank in class)

Figure 3. A student's working portfolio

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

This study aimed at investigating whether and how students had made progress in writing and learning by constructing e-portfolios in a web-based composition course. Data were collected from a questionnaire survey, interviews, classroom observations, students' web posting and portfolios. Multiple sources and methods were employed to ensure methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

A survey on students' perspectives of the e-portfolio curriculum and their learning was administered by the end of the course. Each item was scored on a 5-point scale from 5 "strongly agree" through 3 "not sure" to 1 "strongly disagree." A couple of items were reverse-scored in order to reduce response set bias. Frequencies were grouped into three categories - "agree and strongly agree", "not sure", and "disagree and strongly disagree" due to small sample size. Results of the survey were analyzed by a chi-square "goodness of fit"

test to detect differences in students' opinions and perceptions with significance value set at .05.

Interviews and observations were integrated into classroom procedures. During teacher-student conferences, students were interviewed to understand their concerns and difficulties in learning processes and the information used as a reference to improve teaching strategies and course design. The teacher also took observation notes after reading and responding to students' web postings and/or online interaction with students. Both interviews and observations were employed to cross-validate the survey results.

Students' learning progress was investigated based on their portfolio reflections as well as frequency and accuracy of their web postings. Given that students' free writings on the web mirrored their competence authentically, such samples were chosen, scrutinized, and then analyzed by paired t-tests to detect differences in their writing between two semesters. Frequency was recorded by the web-course system. Errors were first detected by Microsoft Word's spellcheck and grammar check tools and then examined by two teachers. Students' journals and reflections were coded by two independent coders with agreement on themes and categories to interpret student's growth and change.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Students' Perspectives of Learning Achievements and the Curriculum

The survey results (see Appendix A) showed that by the end of the course, significantly more students stated that they were good learners ($X2=7.3$, $df=19$, $p<.05$), writers ($X2=7.3$, $df=19$, $p<.05$), readers ($X2=11.5$, $df=19$, $p<.05$), and had fulfilled the course requirements ($X2=9.7$, $df=19$, $p<.01$), and that the course had met their expectations ($X2=7.9$, $df=19$, $p<.05$). As for computer skills, students seemed to be conservative about their achievements; nevertheless, the mean of 3.1 suggested that students were prone to considering they have gained relevant skills of computer technology.

As regards students' opinions of the e-portfolio curriculum, significantly the students favored the implemented e-curriculum. Ninety percent disagreed that the curriculum is very boring and unreasonable but deemed it as meaningful and rewarding ($X2=29.2$, $df=19$, $p<.01$). A

great majority agreed that they benefited from the curriculum in such aspects as writing and reading ($X2=7.6$, $df=19$, $p<.01$), collaboration and communication ($X2=7.6$, $df=19$, $p<.05$), intrapersonal examination ($X2=17.5$, $df=19$, $p<.01$), computer skills ($X2=29.2$, $df=19$, $p<.01$), and critical thinking, organizational, analytical skills ($X2=29.2$, $df=19$, $p<.01$), though half of them were not certain that the curriculum helped them develop closer relationships with classmates (still rated at a mean of 3.13).

3.2. Advantages and Challenges

The content analysis of interview transcripts, observation notes, students' journals and portfolio reflections discovered several emerging themes subsumed under advantages of the e-portfolio writing curriculum and implementation challenges. The perceived advantages are discussed below:

1. It is convenient and flexible. Students felt they were given more freedom in this e-course of writing. At first they came to the assigned computer lab during the class meeting, but gradually some logged into the course page without showing up in the classroom. They became accustomed to the virtual classroom. They were informed of the course requirements and could turn in their assignments anywhere any time as long as they accessed the course page via the Internet. They deemed this e-curriculum as convenient and flexible.

2. It imposes strict deadlines on assignments and promotes autonomous learning. The webcourse system announced deadlines of the assignments and reminded students of what to be done whenever they logged into the course page. Failing to meet the deadlines, students would not be able to turn in assignments (e.g. drafts and reviews) to the course page nor get graded. Students considered the webcourse system a "cold and strict manager" (C03, Journal, 2002/11/05) but helped them avoid procrastination and develop a good habit of time management.

Given that all assignment instructions (including writing models, guidelines, and Internet sources) are available at the course page any time, the teacher lectured only when a new composition task started or a writing test or timed writing was given. All the other time students were learning by themselves. In fact, they could also choose not to meet the class in

person, but virtually instead. They could interact with the teacher or other classmates via the message board whenever help needed. They could log off whenever tasks finished. Enjoying the control of learning at their own paces, students achieved learning autonomy.

> Learning on the Internet is so convenient that we can use it any time and everywhere. That's the most different part in learning from our freshman composition. This is also the first course that I spend so much time on the Internet. Setting the deadlines prevents us from handing in papers late. For me, that's really a strong strength to push me to accomplish the assignments on time. (C15, Journal, 2002/10/23)

3. It involves students in frequent writing and reading. Students were required to write and respond to others at least once a week on the forum, with extra credits earned when posting more on the Web. They posted writings because they had to at first, but they became quite fond of doing so later. As time went by, the class was developing into a supportive writing and learning community on the forum. Responses nurtured student writers so much that they changed their view of writing from private to that of communicative and shared. Some had taken to writing and sharing so much that they formed a habit of reading and responding on the forum. The following excerpts describe how one student first presented her perspective of the writing forum; then the other responded with a similar notion that the forum had made writing as sharing thoughts, concerns, and care.

> I think this composition site is a wonderful land. In this web site, I can know every classmate; I can know what happened to them and their situations. It is a place of sharing emotions and feelings with each other. Moreover, you can find you have many friends that they know you and show considerations to you. The invisible gap smashed little by little with classmates' reflection and reading your articles. (C02, Journal, 2003/3/25)

> I also agree to your view. In the past, I post the article in this composition site because the professor asks us to do it. However, now I've found the composition is really useful for me, especially the discussing area. At first, I did not feel comfortable to write about my feelings. I thought they're personal and private, should not be read by all in the class. But little by little, when others reply to my article, I always felt warm ad happy. Sometimes the suggestions which classmates offer are really helpful for me. When I know that certain classmate understand what I really want to express, I am moved….some people are not good at expressing by speaking. Therefore, through this discussing area, we can express what is in our mind by writing. Now, I like this place very much. I can post my feelings or experiences to share with others. (C06, Journal, 2003/4/1)

4. It engages students in critical reading and reflection and enhances their writing knowledge and skills. This e-curriculum demanded students review each other's drafts. Students stated that their writing and reading skills were sharpened by both reviewing peers' writing and

gaining feedback from multiple perspectives. They considered the electronic colored notes of peers (pertaining grammar, wording, and mechanics) made adjacent to or in the margin of their text helped them see the differences and observed appropriate ways to express their meanings. Doing peer reviews, students realized they had learned from each other how to read and comment.

> I made progress in writing and reviewing. I wrote more and better. Feedback from peers and teacher helped me revise and produce good compositions….I learned to use colors to mark my peers' drafts and provide comments. Reading my peers' feedback, I also learned how to review and give specific and good comments. (C18, Portfolio Reflection)

In addition, reflection, the center of epistemological awareness, was required in portfolio pedagogy. During the semester, students were told to examine their writing with reviewers' feedback in each composition task, and by end of the semester, reflect on their semester-long writing progress. In their portfolios, they needed to present a reflective paper, which contained discussions of their writing processes, strengths and weaknesses, the texts chosen and rhetorical strategies used, readers' feedback and revisions hereto, and relationship among the collected texts. Critical reflections made their writing process and progress visible. For example, one student said,

> When I put all my drafts of every composition in order, I read all my drafts again. This kind of feeling is really amazing! I really feel that my writing style has changed little by little. Reviewing and revising are painful but helpful. Because of the help of my peers and professor, I improved my articles a lot. (C05, Portfolio Reflection)

5. It fosters students' information literacy. Learning via network and presenting writing with multi-media is an essential goal set for this curriculum. A couple of students were not sure about their computer skills at first, but by the end of the second semester all of the students presented their e-portfolios and fulfilled the course requirements step by step. With the help of technology, they all felt empowered as writers and designers when witnessing their e-portfolios in shape and winning applause from audience (Observation, 2003/06/12). In fact, regarding the portfolio project, students seemed to place more emphasis on the technology than writing. They were awed by the advanced technological tools such as digital camera and authoring tools for webpage design, and enjoyed so much incorporating text, graphics, music, and pictures into their designs. To them, electronic portfolios provided them a playground for learning where they could explore technological information in a playful way. For example, one student remarked that

It's not the first time for me to do the portfolio, I still feel very nervous.…Because I had no idea about how to use FrontPage, I had to figure it out step by step. That increased difficulties of finishing the portfolio. However, I still made it. I really learned a lot through the process.…I spent a lot of time making my composition comfortable to read. I searched from the Internet for appropriate pictures and music. I used different fonts and colors to display my writing. I had so much fun in experimenting and designing. It's like playing with those artifacts as blocks and bricks. I was creating a magic kingdom of my own. (C03, Portfolio Reflection)

6. It cultivates ownership and authorship. This curriculum allowed students to generate electronic portfolios of their own by experiencing and demonstrating writing with the power of information technology. While creating their electronic portfolios, they were constructing knowledge as authors and designers, rather than mere consumers of information (Perkins, 1986). This act of creating/constructing meaning cultivates student ownership and authorship immensely. Addressing to readers of their portfolio reflections, students regarded themselves as writers and designers.

My brain child was finally borne to the world! It is designed as a notebook, just like my diary, recording all my works and wonderful memories in the semester.… I arranged the content in the order of dates so that you readers can see the progress of my writing. (C08, Portfolio Reflection)

From blank to what you are now seeing, the process is full of difficulties. However, I finished it! I found a lot of fun in creating an e-book of my own. It puts topics of writings on the left in the order of my preference. But you may choose to read what interests you by clicking on the links.…My portfolio may not be perfect, but it is special and unique. For it represents my creation and records my effort and growth. (C15, Portfolio Reflection)

Challenges encountered during the curriculum implementation are identified as follows:

1. It increases distance among students and the teacher. Some students felt uncomfortable or insecure when not seeing a teacher lecturing in front and classmates around. They felt the teacher and classmates were far away in the networked class and preferred seeing and talking to people in person; however, a virtual classroom was more appealing to others. The following excerpts show how two students posed different perspectives on this issue and indicate students differed in learning and communication styles.

In this semester, we attend the class through the Internet.…To tell the truth, I feel strange that the teacher is not in front of the class. I am not used to this kind of class. First, I am a person who doesn't like to talk with others through the Internet. Talking with people through the Internet makes me feel

strange. I cannot have the "security." … we talk to each other through the Internet, we only can see the words …cannot see the expressions on each other's faces..... Sometimes I will feel disappointed seeing the words of other people through the Internet… maybe they never thought about that what they said would hurt me. Sometimes they even don't want to hurt me, they just talk to me with their ways. However, it is hard for me to recognize what the true meaning in their words. Sometimes, they just have a joke, but I don't know because I cannot see their faces. (C09, Journal, 2002/10/15)

In fact, I feel totally different from you. I feel much safer to be in front of the computer instead of face to face! Sometimes I don't like the traditional way of attending classes, and here are some reasons to explain why. First, sometimes I just can't stop chatting to other people in the class, therefore, sometimes I'll miss out some important information from the teacher. But since almost every single announcement from the teacher is put online now, I don't really have much time to chat with my friends by "typing." This problem no longer exists! Second, I don't like to walk out the classroom to go to the toilet or something when the teacher is on the stage (even if the teacher permits), maybe this can be regarded as my personal problem, but I personally think it's rude to do so. And now, since the teacher is not here, I can always feel free to take a short rest or go the wash room. Well, I think I'll like the Internet classes more and more! (C19, Journal, 2002/10/16)

In about a month, perceived distance diminished gradually when students were acquainted with the electronic classroom and found they got more freedom in learning. As one student pointed out, "After about one month's learning, I have been used to this way of class and quite enjoy it. We get more freedom." (C04, Journal, 2002/10/20). Another student added, "Although we do not see the teacher and classmates, we increase the interaction through words." (C05, Journal, 2002/10/21).

2. It frustrates students by online tests. The webcourse system allows tests in formats of true-or-false, blank fillings, and multiple choices. Students took the online test every week to exercise their grammatical knowledge. They got scores immediately after submitting their answers online. Some got frustrated for not being able to get satisfactory grades; others were annoyed for not finishing the test due to computer sudden breakdowns or certain unknown technical problems; a handful of students did not like the electronic way ("clicking the mouse only" C11, Journal, 2003/11/11) to answer the test. Mostly students' frustration or confusion resulted from insufficient knowledge of English grammar and computer networking. To drive their learning motive and boost their confidence, online tests were later established as weekly self-tests and test items adapted from exercises of the grammar book used in the class.

3. It irritates students when computers have problems or breakdowns. Fear of computer technology is gender-related (Chen, 2002). At the beginning of the course, the class, mainly

composed of females, showed uncertainty about their computer skills. A few, lost in the middle of computer breakdowns, expressed great concerns of this problem. Besides, after students got accustomed to the ease of Internet accessibility, they saved their writings or projects at the server provided for the webcourse. They felt annoyed if the uploaded file was missing without any clue or warning. Below is an example of students' frustration.

> After I upload my work, I can't open it directly on the website. When I click on the file, it just opens a blank one. I can't see my article at all. What happened? I tried many times but the results are the same. God! It's so terrible. The other trouble is that if you just hang on the site for a long time, the system will kick you out. Many times when I prepared to type something after Professor Chen turn off the broadcasting system, I found the system had already kicked me out. I needed to type what I had written again. However, for most of time, I just gave up those articles because I was lazy to re-enter the site again. And I don't remember exactly what I just wrote. (C12, Journal, 2003/01/04)

As a student noted, a traditional classroom is more "human and reliable because learning through computers can be so troublesome and annoying sometimes." (C11, Interview, 2002/10/06). This suggests the limitation of computer technology in pedagogical practices and the irreplaceable essence of traditional human communication.

4. It demands intensive use of computers, which causes harm to vision and health. Some students brought up their concerns about declining vision and health after intensive use of computers. The course demanded them to utilize the tool of computers and access the Internet frequently. "Because the entire course is put on the Internet, we have to spend more time to get along with computer. It does damage to our eyes." (C08, Journal, 2002/10/21). The e-portfolio task especially made them "sleep with the computer" for several days (C07, Portfolio Reflection). Of course the teacher also experienced the same problem (blurry vision and pain in back and wrist) while setting up and conducting the class via network. Apparently the e-learning class was realized as a double-edge sword, which facilitates learning and writing but risks health when used inadequately.

5. It involves reading and assessment of visual text, not only verbal text. While the class was shifting from paper-based to electronic-based, assessment became a thorny issue. As most students enjoyed using visual or even audio devices to display their writings, graphic design and visuals were highlighted in student assessment (Observation, 2003/01/12). In the paper-based writing classroom, students' writing performance is mainly assessed by what is written, that is, the verbal text. But in an electronic writing classroom, elements of visual text and

hyperlinks are very likely to be integrated into the verbal text in students' presentations. As Williams (2001b) put it, "After all, we see verbal text before we read it" (p. 125). Following the trend in which literacy is "now changing in favor of visual communication" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 32, cited in Williams, 2001a: 22), students' electronic writing apparently needs a disparate assessment. In a composition classroom transitional from paper-based, such assessment however may be disadvantageous to those who are still confined to the past training of verbal bias, and/or who are skillful in writing but unable to construct and unravel visuals with technology.

3.3. Students' Change and Growth

Both survey results and content analysis of qualitative data suggested students' changes in learning attitude and writing concepts. Along the course, students gradually got accustomed to networked classes; they became autonomous learners, developed a habit of writing, reading, and reflection, changed their view of writing as private to that of communicative, and felt empowered as writers and designers.

A comparison of students' web-based writing frequency and accuracy in two semesters also demonstrated students' growth in writing. Table 2 presents the paired t-test results of students' writing frequency and accuracy.

| | N | 1st Semester | | 2nd Semester | | t | p (one-tail) |
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Frequency	20	20.375	17.735	38.5	27.350	-5.209	0.00005296
Accuracy	20	0.001832	2.931	0.009638	0.016	-2.12111	0.025493

Table 2. Paired T-Test results of students web-based writing frequency and accuracy

The paired test-test results showed that significantly students posted more by topics and words (t= -5.209, p<.01) and wrote more accurately (t= -2.12111, p<.05) in the second semester. Close readings of students' journals and responses on the Web in the second semester found that most mistakes are typing or spelling flaws, suggesting that students

focused more on meaning and communication in web postings. Interviews with students confirmed that they wrote more freely and frequently online in the second semester (Group Interview, 6/4/2003). Such results indicate that writing frequency improves writing fluency and accuracy.

4. Implications

Although the effect of e-portfolio curriculum on students' learning and writing was quite encouraging, the following issues need to be addressed and reflected upon in pedagogical practices:

1. Employing models and collaborative groups to support the development of information literacy. To scaffold information literacy, teachers should demonstrate basic skills in hypertext writings in the classroom. Models or sample procedures can be provided at the course page. In addition, novice users of the needed software may be paired up with more experienced ones when the class meets at the computer classroom. Female or less experienced students may be in need of help more at the beginning. Like the scaffolds provided within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), assistance and guidance can gradually remove or fade away as students' mastery of the skills increase.

2. Scheduling conferences and teacher-fronted instruction at the traditional classroom to accommodate different students' preference of classroom interaction. Although e-learning is a trend in this era of technology and information, those who are strangers to the virtual world may easily get lost in a web-based class. A transitional period from paper-based to electronic based should be lengthened when a class is not familiar with virtual communication. Classroom lectures and face-to-face conferences can be scheduled regularly at the beginning and gradually made optional when students feel more comfortable with learning via computer networking.

3. Administering key examinations in paper mode to ensure administration reliability, online grammar exercises as self-tests. Before logistical and technical difficulties of computer networking are under control, high-ratio assessment such as writing tests or timed writing is

better administered in paper mode while weekly exercises of linguistic knowledge can be practiced as online self-tests. After all, grades always matter much to students.

4. Discussing the effective use of hypertext and visual rhetoric and modeling as e-literacy learners. Computer technology has revolutionized the writing instruction and reshaped our views of reading and writing. Traditionally, composition pedagogy focuses mainly on verbal rhetoric through a single mode of representation. Seldom are page design and visual rhetoric stressed in teaching and learning. Along with technology advances, visual rhetoric and hypertext writing have entered writing classrooms. Not only computers allow students take control of the page, but also the shape and feature of electronic writing suggest new forms of writing assessment (Takayoshi, 1996). While "e-literacy" (Hwaisher & Selfe, 1997) challenges traditional literacy and threatens to undermine writing (Pullman, 2002), composition teachers might as well take Takyoshi's (1996) advice—"engaging students in critical assessments of the differences between hard copy and online copy or between reading a printed text and a hypertext" (p. 256). Discussions of effective use of hypertext and visual rhetoric can develop students' awareness of the important features of electronic texts and understanding of how to achieve, not risk rhetorical goals by electronic page design. In addition, we should adopt Williams' (2001b) suggestion that we must model for our students how we integrate visual rhetoric into composition and expand our literacy before demanding the skills to compose and critique new media compositions.

5. Conclusion

This study examined students' perceptions and learning of constructing their electronic portfolios in a networked composition classroom. By the end of the course, it was found that not only did students enjoy the process and product, but also significant growth and change in their writing and learning were observed. The portfolio process demanded them to manage their learning schedule, engaged them in frequent reading and writing, fostered their critical reading and reflection, sharpened their writing knowledge and skills, and promoted their information literacy. Moreover, the portfolio product demonstrated their achievement of ownership and authorship. Results indicated that students achieved autonomy in learning, wrote more frequently and accurately, and most importantly, felt empowered as writers and designers. Challenges encountered were mainly related to computer networking, students'

preference of classroom interaction and test administration, and assessment of electronic writing.

The e-portfolio writing curriculum of this study infused technology into the writing classroom. Though labor- and resource-intensive, the study demonstrated that such a curriculum is a worthwhile endeavor to undertake. The forum created by students' weekly writing and responding nurtured student writers and provoked their love for writing. E-feedback color-marked on the draft displayed differences in written expressions and helped students analyze rhetorical strategies and improve writing ability. As to applications of technology and computer software, students eventually were able to bring order to chaos by creating their e-portfolios through purposeful exploration and sustained investigation. The process of problem-solving and writing with visual rhetoric, challenging but rewarding, indeed had their curiosity and motivation piqued. Such finding echoes the claim by Phinney (1996) that students were more engaged in hypertext writing than paper texts. Further, the study suggests that e-portfolio writing pedagogy, when practiced appropriately, has the potential to empower EFL university students as writers and designers. It is by constructing e-portfolios that students perceived their writing process and progress, exercised webpage designing, realized their love for writing and talent in arts, and achieved ownership and authorship.

Appendix A

Results of students' perspectives of learning achievements and the curriculum

Item	SA & A % (n)	N % (n)	SD&D % (n)	X2	Mean	SD
I. Learning Achievement						
1. In this course, I am a good learner.	50 (10)	45 (9)	5 (1)	7.3*	3.45	0.72
2. In this course, I am a good writer.	50 (10)	45 (9)	5 (1)	7.3*	3.45	0.63
3. In this course, I am a good reader.	60 (12)	40 (8)	0 (0)	11.2*	3.6	0.50
4. In this course, I am good at managing and operating computer and technology.	45 (9)	30 (6)	25 (5)	1.3	3.1	0.83
5. I have fulfilled the requirements of this course.	65 (13)	25 (5)	10 (2)	9.7**	3.7	0.73
6. This course is like what I expected at the beginning of the semester.	55 (11)	40 (8)	5 (1)	7.9*	3.65	0.63

II. E-Portfolio Curriculum

Item						
1. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me practice different genres (kinds) of writing.	90 (10)	10 (2)	0 (0)	29.2**	3.9	0.34
2. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me increase my writing fluency.	70 (14)	30 (6)	0 (0)	14.8**	3.7	0.48
3. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me perceive my growth or progress in writing.	75 (15)	25 (5)	0 (0)	17.5**	3.8	0.45
4. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me perceive myself as a writer.	60 (12)	40 (8)	0 (0)	11.2**	3.6	0.63
5. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me become a reader of my writing.	90 (18)	10 (2)	0 (0)	29.2**	3.9	0.34
6. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me collect what I have written this semester.	90 (18)	10 (2)	0 (0)	29.2**	3.9	0.34
7. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me little in writing development. **a**	0 (0)	40 (8)	60 (12)	11.2**	3.6	0.63
8.The e-portfolio curriculum helps me acquire relevant computer knowledge and skills.	90 (18)	10 (2)	0 (0)	29.2*	3.9	0.34
9. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me exercise my grammatical knowledge and discourse knowledge.	60 (12)	40 (8)	0 (0)	11.2**	3.7	0.50
10. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me appreciate others' opinions.	95 (19)	5 (1)	0 (0)	34.3**	3.95	0.25
11. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me collaborate and communicate with others.	60 (12)	30 (6)	10 (2)	7.6*	3.55	0.63
12. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me develop closer relationships with classmates.	30 (6)	50 (10)	20 (4)	2.8	3.1	0.72
13. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me examine myself, reflect on what I have done, and map out what I will be.	75 (15)	25 (5)	0 (0)	17.5**	3.75	0.45
14. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me become responsible for my own learning.	90 (18)	10 (2)	0(0)	29.2**	3.9	0.34
15. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me form a habit to check or send online messages from the teacher and classmates.	60 (12)	40 (8)	0 (0)	11.2**	3.82	0.63
16. I enjoy online discussions with the teacher and classmates.	55 (11)	30 (6)	15 (3)	4.9	3.44	0.73
17. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me become a critical thinker, for example, giving constructive feedback after reading peers' drafts, analyzing my writing processes, and providing reasons for my thought and behavior.	70 (14)	30 (6)	0(0)	14.8**	3.7	0.48
18. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me learn how to organize things.	90 (18)	10 (2)	0(0)	29.2*)	3.9	0.34
19. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me develop my potential in arts and design.	75 (15)	25 (5)	0(0)	17.5**	3.75	0.45
20. The e-portfolio curriculum is very boring and unreasonable. **a**	0(0)	10 (2)	90 (18)	29.2**	3.9	0.34

21. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me become a better learner.	70 (14)	30 (6)	0(0)	14.8**	3.7	0.50
22. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me become a better writer.	60 (12)	30 (6)	10 (2)	7.6*	3. 6	0.63
23. The e-portfolio curriculum helps me become a better reader.	60 (12)	30 (6)	10 (2)	7.6*	3.7	0.73
24. The e-portfolio curriculum makes me a better user of computer and technology.	70 (14)	30 (6)	0(0)	14.8**	3.7	0.36
25. The e-portfolio curriculum is meaningful and rewarding to me.	90 (18)	10 (2)	0(0)	29.2**	4.1	0.38

SA= strongly agree, 5; A= agree, 4; N= not sure, 3; D= disagree; 2, SD= strongly disagree, 1

**p<.01, *p<.05

a Item reverse-scored

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INTERNET LESSON PLANS

HAPPY ONLINE: A BLENDED-LEARNING LESSON PLAN

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Level: Upper-Intermediate and above

Time: at least 3 periods (50 minutes each)

Aims:

1. To enhance development of four language skills.

2. To engage in a chat activity with a native speaker of English.

3. To foster oral communication skills by giving learners opportunities to use the language in an authentic manner or real-life situation.

Technical Requirements:

● At least one computer with the Internet access

● In voice/text chats, you could use any free chat software available online. Commonly used programs are Yahoo Messenger (YM) available at

http://messenger.yahoo.com/ and MSN Messenger. See featured URLs below for links on other Free Online Voice/Text Chat Software. In this lesson, I used iVocalize from Talking Communities which is provided by ALADO (see http://www.alado.com/webheads). This chat program has been graciously offered by Mr. Andy Pincon for members of Webheads online community).

- a multimedia projector or any broadcasting system that could project images/sounds.

- an optional webcam

Introduction

The lesson plan is heavily influenced by a musical composition written by a singer/composer, educator and a fellow-webhead, Michael Coghlan (see http://users.chariot.net.au/~michaelc/songs.htm#hol). The theme, Happy Online, is highly appropriate for this type of blended learning activity. The lyrics fit well with the students' way of life and they could easily relate to the message. The theme is up-to-date and could be used by other teachers in different contexts. The message of the song is about meeting people online and getting to know more about them. It is also about technology - the fun and fear that is associated with using it, about the simple joys in life that we experience when we go online. On a personal level, it is that golden smile that people have every time they see each other's faces on the web cam.

This activity is divided into three phases, 1) pre-online chat activity, 2) during chat, and 3) post-online chat activity.

Necessary Preparation

Prior to the online event, the teacher should arrange for a guest speaker (a native speaker of English or a non-native but with near-native English proficiency) to meet with the Ss. Since this activity requires collaboration between the teacher, the guest speaker/s and Ss, it is advisable to invite someone you know (a friend, family member/s and/or colleagues). You may also find support from professional organizations such as TESOL or IATEFL and their respective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Interest Sections (IS) or Special Interest

Group (SIG). Teachers can also benefit from joining online collaborative communities such as the Webheads in Action (http://www.geocities.com/vance_stevens/papers/evonline2002/webheads.htm – see the other article in this issue), ePals (www.epals.com), and Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connections (www.iecc.org). Time and availability of the guest speaker should also be taken into consideration.

Note

[You should give clear instructions to students on what to do, provide the necessary URL links (or websites) where they could listen to the song online and the web page of the forum where they will be posting their comments. This activity requires online work, ideal to give as an assignment. This will also give students ample time to prepare their work.]

The students were instructed to post their answers to the questions on the forum http://dcyeh.com/ipw-web/bulletin/bb/viewtopic.php?t=5. Their answers were used as a springboard to get our online discussion going. (Another alternative to creating web pages is to post the URLs and assignment questions on a blog, on a forum, via emails and other ways of making these links available for them.)

Procedure

I. Pre-Online Chat Activity (1 week prior to the scheduled blended activity)

1. Before the online meeting, list all the links and forward them to students. Also give some notes on topics/issues that could be further explored.

2. Instruct the students to read and answer the questions posted on the forum. Advise Ss that activity in the forum is being observed by the online guest/s in preparation for the online discussion.

II. Blended learning activity: Online chat

Warm-up and pre-online chat in-class activity

Time: 50 minutes

1. Have a short discussion about the song "Happy Online", which can be initiated by sharing your own experiences with meeting people online

3. Then, gather students' opinions and experiences by asking questions such as, "Have you ever met someone online?", "Has this experience bloomed into friendships?", "Do you have inhibitions on using chat rooms, Yahoo messenger, Skype, etc.?"

4. After soliciting answers to your questions, you can now tell your Ss what the activity is about. For example, "You will be meeting (name of guest speaker) online and he/she will share with you his/her views on meeting people online."

5. Explain in detail the tasks that they will have to accomplish for the day.

Voice Conference with Students

Time: 50-60 minutes

Notes

For the online chat activity, the teacher should make sure that the computer to be used has Internet access and chat software has been successfully installed.

Steps:

1. Log in and start the voice conference.

2. Test sound equipment with your invited guest making sure that the sounds from both sides are working.

3. Start the conference as soon as everybody (students and the guest speaker) has settled down. The LCD projector should be running at this point to broadcast and project images as they appear on the monitor.

4. Give brief information on the following: topic of online discussion, online guests' bio, and the class (course and number of students).

5. Pass the microphone to a student volunteer who will start the discussion. This could be in a form of a question or statement based on the song.

6. Ss take turns in asking/giving questions or comments/opinions.

7. Alado has a built-in recording function that allows you to record the online discussion in .htm file which contains both the audio (saved as .wav file) and the web interface of Alado showing all the webpages or PowerPoint presentations that were used during the online chat. If the chat software you are using does not have a recording function, then you will need to have an external recording program that could capture audio from your computer, i.e. Total Recorder and Real Player 10. Both the text and voice log can be used for assessment purposes and material for peer feedback.

Teaching Tips

The interaction between the Ss and the guest speaker should be as spontaneous and natural as possible. If you lose voice or any of your Ss is unable to hear the sound, it would be wise to settle for a text-based chat.

III. Offline Post-chat Activity

Time: 50 minutes

1. Follow up your guest speaker's comments with some basic comprehension questions to check whether the whole class understands the issues that were discussed during the online chat. You may touch on some lessons that they have learned by invoking such questions as 'What did you learn from the online discussion?'

2. Summarize the topics and events that occurred during this activity by looking back at the aims of this lesson plan.

3. Take this opportunity to remind students to be careful when using online chat program. With the Internet, education and learning will never be the same again but due to its open nature people with bad intentions could use it for their own benefit.

Implications for teaching and learning

Blending online technology with traditional classroom has its own challenges and limitations. Technical difficulties often occur when you least expect them - and they do happen. These glitches can make or break your session. Yet, similar to any presentations, be it F2F or online, preparation is the key. Online discussions would only work if you have invited guests who are willing to spend their time with students. Planning is important, but still, it is not foolproof. Guests may arrive too early or too late, and worst; they could miss the whole event due to time differences and time conversions.

In a nutshell, the tasks in this activity are designed to achieve the aims of the lesson by combining a blended approach to learning English that crosses boundaries and cultural dimensions. This online discussion gives students the opportunity to practice and use in real time the skills that they have been trying to learn and hone for the past year. It was a chance for them to actually speak in an authentic manner. Having said the pedagogical implications of online discussions, we could not, however, refute the possible dangers of visiting public online chat rooms. As teachers, we should take note and cautiously address the safety issues concerning the students' use of online chat tools outside the classroom.

ON THE WEB

BECOMING A WEBHEAD: FIRST STEPS IN BLENDED AND ONLINE EFL/ESL TEACHING

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Abstract

"Becoming a Webhead" (BaW) is an online teacher training workshop about Web-based communication tools with the aim of introducing EFL/ESL teachers worldwide to this fascinating new world so that they can start blending them in their daily practice. In two years, 358 teachers around the world have joined the BaW online sessions and are now using technologies in their teaching practices.

In this paper, we will unveil part of what went on before, during and after the BaW 2005 online workshop.

Introduction

"Becoming a Webhead" had its first edition in January 2004 (see González, 2004) and the second in January 2005. It came about two years after we had joined the Webheads in Action workshop, at a moment when we felt the need to "go back to basics" and do for others what had been done for us. The aim of this workshop is to give participants hands-on train in different Web-based communication tools so that they feel comfortable to start incorporating one or more of them in their face-to-face practice. The work of the moderators is divided into three distinct phases: before (planning), during (implementing) and after the session (reflecting), with a greater and constant workload on the first two, but a special relevance on the last, where lessons are learned.

Planning

Planning started well in advance, around mid-September. Ideas were jotted down as they came to mind and were exchanged by email. There were regular meetings every two weeks with a pre-set agenda that was sent out in advance by email, so that we had time to reflect on those aspects. The meetings were generally held in one of our offices at Tapped In.

At each meeting ideas and topics for the syllabus were discussed, decisions made, items postponed and/or defined for the following meeting, and tasks assigned: setting up the Yahoo Group (YG), working on the content of the syllabus and weekly lesson plans, writing the welcome message and mini-tutorials on certain features of Yahoo Groups, creating a discussion forum and a blog, contacting guest speakers for each week, creating a template for our Website (http://80.60.224.77/dyg/baw-05/index.html), which would include all the relevant materials from the 6 weeks, and inserting the pre-workshop content as it was ready. As the weeks went by, the workshop seemed to take on a nice and motivating shape, as had been the case with our first session in 2004, and the original "Webheads in Action" session back in 2002, coordinated by Vance Stevens (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/)

Registration

Registration started 3 weeks in advance and, two weeks prior to the official beginning of the session, it was impossible not to launch the interaction, though on an unofficial basis. It was intense from the very first minute. Participants seemed very avid for this type of training. Several sent their intros and photos at once, started exploring the different features of YG, downloaded Yahoo Messenger and, together with the moderators, were part of the welcoming committee. In effect, this meant that we had an eight-week session, and not the planned six weeks, with a total of 208 participants while in 2004 we had 150. It was very hard work and quite exhausting, but very gratifying.

Syllabus

The syllabus consisted of 6 topics (Yahoo Groups; Text and voice synchronous communication tools; Blogs and Web pages; Virtual classrooms and voice email; Online class materials; and Blended learning), one a week. The expression "hands-on" in the title was there on purpose for two reasons: that it is exactly how we wanted participants to work, by using their hands to do things, explore and experiment with tools, create end products, and generate action; and to reinforce the idea that this was a practical, not a theoretical workshop. How else can things be done in the online world but with the hands? However, besides exploring different tools, participants also had the opportunity to reflect on readings related to the topics we suggested in our weekly lesson plans. These reflections took place in the forum we created for that purpose (http://pub34.bravenet.com/forum/2849384074).

The role of the moderators and the implementation phase

The role of the moderators is essential from the very beginning, first and foremost in setting the atmosphere, but also in setting the pace. We welcome participants one by one and his/her intro and photo, when there is one, are included in the Participants page. This has a two-fold effect: not only does it give members an immediate sense of belonging and feeling at home,

but it's also a pleasant way of relating a name to a face and of having a reference about each member all along the workshop. (Not everyone who registers ever sends an introduction or even a message. However, if they have an urgent request, they will jump right in without the slightest intro. As happens in real life, good manners or netiquette are essential.)

With few exceptions, moderators reply to every message within 24 hours, generally on an individual basis, sometimes collectively. It's very important to answer questions or make a comment on a timely basis. Curiously, as the days go by, participants feel more familiarized and at ease, and begin collaborating in this task, which not only lightens the load of the moderators, but also gets the participants playing a gradually larger role, as is desirable. Thus, social scaffolding - "A collaborative learning arrangement in which more competent users respond to the learners by providing information to help them move to more advanced levels of knowledge" (BaW2005 Glossary) - surfaces in a very natural way, because in a large group such as this one, there are inevitably different levels of expertise, even among newbies. To wrap up all this interaction, there is a weekly threads page that was put together by the moderators and participants on a rotational basis. Though a very time-consuming task, it is worthwhile, because it represents a repository of invaluable information that isn't lost if the YG is deleted, and the information can be found more easily than in the messages section of the YG. Moderators also need to be constantly alert to keep the interaction going and lively whether by reminding participants of the tasks to be carried out, suggesting additional timely activities, or bringing up more challenges.

We also coordinate daily and weekly events, send out Calendar reminders before each special event, and make sure that participants unable to take part in live presentations due to professional or time-zone constraints have access to the recording in the shortest period of time. We not only post the link to the mailing list, but also publish an integrated Web page with everything related to the event.

Giving online synchronous help for several hours a week at Yahoo Messenger or MSN Messenger is also part of our duties during the session. This is a popular element, because participants can get timely help in real time and then carry on with their work. In brief, moderators are to online courses what teachers are to face-to-face lessons: the mediators, the guides, the facilitators, the liaisons or linking elements between participants and content. We intervene "to taste", more at the beginning in order to get the action going, then progressively and subtly let go and step back as much as possible, but are always ready to intervene. In

short, we try to make this workshop a warm, friendly, responsive, helpful, clarifying, motivating and satisfying place that will generate constant interaction and action.

The venues

There are four main venues for synchronous meetings along the six weeks: Yahoo Messenger, Tapped In, the Alado.net Webheads Room and the Learning Times Elluminate Webheads Room.

Yahoo! Messenger (YM) (http://messenger.yahoo.com) is free software for instant messaging, text and voice chat, that allows for secure one-on-one and group conferencing in real time. YM is part of the Yahoo! tools family, so participants often download it during the first week when they're getting familiar with other features. This is the place where the moderators are available to give real-time help. It is also the place where our live presentations can take place. However, additional tools, such as Total Recorder or Audacity, are necessary to record the session and then make it available online with the chatlog.

MSN Messenger (http://messenger.msn.com/), which is very similar to the previous platform, is an alternative, though used on a much smaller scale.

Tapped In (http://tappedin.org/tappedin/) is "the online workplace of an international community of education professionals... who gather [t]here to learn, collaborate, share, and support one another" (Stevens, 2005). Towards the end of the first week there is always a tour of this online facility so that participants familiarize themselves with the most useful and relevant synchronous and asynchronous features available. Membership is free and all members get a log by email of each session they participate in. This can be particularly useful when multiple threads go on and several URLs are referred. On the other hand, the logs of all special events are archived online.

The **Alado.net room** (http://www.alado.net/webheads), managed by Andrew Pincon, is a basic virtual classroom with text and voice features, as well as a whiteboard where presentations are projected or Web pages are pushed and shown. Events can be recorded by any participant with Windows Media Player.

The **Learning Times** (http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=273662), managed by Jonathan Finkelstein, is the final venue where we take our participants. It's a very comprehensive virtual classroom with a multi-feature interactive whiteboard that allows for projections of Power Point presentations and webpages, insertion of photos and text, keyboarded or handwritten, video and webcam webcasts, on-the-spot surveys, among others (see Stevens, 2005, for more details on these venues).

During the guest speaker events at these different venues, participants are introduced to new ideas and tools while they become familiar with the platforms. It is essential that registration (which is free) and any necessary downloads be done in advance. In addition, participants are always requested to show up half an hour in advance of the event so that timely help can be given and sound be tested by everyone. Prior to and during the presentations, there is always friendly help from more experienced Webheads to guide participants having difficulties, which is part of the community's very special collaborative spirit.

Drawbacks

As happens with most things in real life in the online world, not everything is "a sea of roses". There are negative aspects both for the participants and moderators. On the participants' side, there is work overload in keeping up with both online and offline responsibilities, adapting to the pace and the volume of message flow, and coping with different time zones. On the moderators' side, there is a drawback that stands out: the overwhelming workload in order to keep up with different fronts, first and foremost, the constant and intense message flow. When a workshop has 200 participants, as happened this year, even if only one-fifth interacts on a more or less daily basis, there is still a significant volume of messages going back and forth, including replies and comments. Our advice for participants is to work at their own pace and select from the syllabus the aspects they have more interest in, and later go back and work on the others. There will always be helping hands reaching out to offer help when the time comes, as has been happening in the Webheads in Action community since 2002.

Curiosities

The ease and speed with which interaction develops and increases has to do with different aspects. First, participants feel at home as soon as they are welcomed and immediately start interacting Then they feel an instant urge to comment on the variety of professional backgrounds they are faced with, which results from the broad spectrum of the participants from every corner of the world, thus generating diversified and interesting interaction about the different professional experiences. Last, they feel that they are among like-minded people who share the same curiosities, needs and interests: technology-enhanced EFL/ESL.

This initial atmosphere generates a sense of belonging and a feeling of security and comfort to interact at one's will, free of constraints, in the privacy of the newly-formed community. On the other hand, knowing that help is on the way as soon as the "Send" button is clicked helps avoid the feelings of helplessness, frustration and isolation so often referred to as negative characteristics of online learning.

Participants also rapidly understand that, though they may have little technological know-how, there is always something that they can teach others. This makes them feel helpful and generates an environment where caring, sharing and collaboration are key-words.

Conclusion

Joining a workshop such as "Becoming a Webhead" is a significant advantage and enrichment at the professional and personal levels. It is a pleasant and useful way to learn about and start using different Web-based communication tools, gradually introduce them in your teaching-learning process and, last but not least, meet colleagues from all over the world and thus enhance your professional horizons in unprecedented ways.

Note

Even though BaW is a TESOL Electronic Village Online session, it is open to TESOL members and non-members as well.

References

González, D. (2004). "Bringing Colleagues into Web-Based Learning and Teaching". *TESOL Essential Teacher. esl/efl.reflection.practice,* vol. 1, no. 4, pp- 22-25.

Stevens, V. (2005). "The future is now: How CMC tools for professional development enhance learning environments for students." 2005 TESOL CALL Interest Session Academic Session: Future Visions of CALL. Available at: http://www.homestead.com/prosites-vstevens/files/efi/papers/tesol/2005/gvs_pres.htm

Sites mentioned in the paper

Alado: http://www.alado.net/

"Becoming a Webhead" Portal: http://80.60.224.77/dyg/baw-05/

"Becoming a Webhead" Glossary: http://80.60.224.77/dyg/baw-05/content/glossary.html

Learning Times: http://www.learningtimes.net/index.shtml

Tapped In: http://tappedin.org/tappedin/

TESOL Electronic Online Village 2005: http://www.geocities.com/ehansonsmi/evo2005/announce.html

Yahoo Messenger: http://messenger.yahoo.com/

Webheads in Action: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/

Software referred

Audacity: http://audacity.sourceforge.net/

Total Recorder: http://www.totalrecorder.com/

A WORD FROM A TECHIE

GRABBING AUDIO AND VIDEO STREAMING FILES

FROM THE WEB

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You may have faced a problem of not being able to use some of the Web materials in class due to the simple reason of them being provided in a streaming format. Unless you have a reasonably fast connection and can use the school lab for that purpose, you are helpless trying to provide your students with a chance of enjoying audio/video clips with intriguing interviews, songs whose lyrics you may want to analyse or any other material of that kind you find perfect for enhancing your class. Whether audio or video, RealAudio or MS Windows Media format, they are usually equally non-downloadable.

Long ago, I managed to find a solution to the problem of capturing the audio files of my choice I wanted to include in the listening practice of my classes. In fact, it was the piece of software called Audiograbber which did the job for me. Audiograbber (http://www.audiograbber.com-us.net) is a free programme that basically copies music and stores it on your computers hard drive. Its main purpose, I believe, was to copy music from

CDs. There is also an option to copy music through the soundcard (though with a slight sound degradation) as well as copy sound via the soundcard from an external source, such as the cassette player or the radio.

Picture 1. Audiograbber's main window

Also, Audiograbber can connect to a database on the Internet and download disc information such as track names. It has a "normalise" function to make tracks from different CDs sound equally loud. The tracks can be saved as WAV files or converted to MP3 or WMA files with external programs or internal codecs such as the LAME freeware MP3, or MS Windows Media Audio codec.

Yet the function I found the most useful for my purpose was grabbing the sound from the Internet audio streaming sources. The whole procedure is fairly simple: once you have downloaded the software and installed it, you have to set it up at least to be able to find the captured files on the hard drive later on after the session. Also the output format needs to be specified. You have to choose options of e.g. saving the sound files as MP3s at 128kb/s quality, which is good enough for majority of applications while playing the output files in class. Remember, if you go for MP3 format, you will have to download and install its codec first, such as The LAME, free software ideally serving the purpose, by copying the lame.dll file into the Audiograbber directory. For more information on codecs go to: http://www.free-codecs.com

Picture 2. Audiograbber's Line in recording window

In order to grab audio online with Audiograbber you have to use the menu [File|Line in sampling], set the controls to the manual mode, if you like to monitor the recording and control it manually, then use the 'mixer' option to check one of the available boxes responsible for grabbing sound. From my experience, checking either 'line in' or 'mixed source' box should do the trick. Once you have done that, play some music from the Net, a saved sound file or a CD to see if the sound level is visible on the volume meter. Finally, adjust it with the mixer slide bar or, if the volume levels do not appear, check another box choosing e.g. 'mixed source.' Now you are ready to start your audiograbbing session.

Nevertheless, I have recently faced another challenge, namely the problem of downloading streaming video files. Since I happen to train Air Force officers and try to upgrade their command of military English, I found it reasonable to look for authentic materials on the Web, ideally briefings, as part of their duty is understanding them to be able to operate within NATO and possibly brief/debrief others as well. The sites which I found perfect in that respect are http://www.pentagonchannel.mil and http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/. The former is a Website for a TV channel offering you a streaming video with live coverage of their programme, which I assume is typically available for American cable TV. Also, it provides you recorded programmes broadcast on their channel. Clicking on any of the pictures listed in the main window opens up a separate panel for video broadcasts which includes a sidebar with lots of subchannels to choose from such as *Newscasts, Top Stories* or *Briefings,* the last one with recent US military briefings directly from Pentagon or Iraq itself to a large extent. The latter site offers current as well as archived transcripts of the briefings available from the Pentagon Channel in the video format.

Combined, they are perfect authentic materials to analyse in any English for military class for watching, listening and text analysis. In the above case the download is basically easy as each video screen is supplemented by a comment with an icon allowing you for a direct download of the video file.

Much more of a problem, though, posed capturing some video files from certain other sites. As my college students find it highly appropriate to be exposed at listening/phonetics classes to a variety of English dialects enhancing their understanding of regional differences in the language, I found the BBC's *Video Nation* (http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/) be cut out for that purpose. The site is a way to meet people from across the UK and hear what they say about their lives and the world around them. You can watch the video clips and test your comprehension in *Listen out!*, check what you have heard by looking at tapescripts, discover facts about life in the UK in *Did you know*, practise your grammar and vocabulary skills in *Language Fix*, then *Get talking!* to develop your speaking skills.

Actually, the site offers a RealVideo clip database providing you with several logically arranged categories of database search. You may want to focus on the dialects throughout Britain and all you have to do to watch people from e.g. Leeds is either to locate the region/person on the map or use a drop down menu with a list of places around the UK. If your preference is to learn what some British people's opinions on different subjects are, go for a thematically arranged option at http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/archive/, providing a wide choice of clips from such Categories as *Tees, Pets* or *Sport*, Features such as *Summer, Race UK* or *Fat Nation*, or Local Sites and other search array of your choice including alphabetical arrangement (both by video title and author's surname) as well as keyword search.

Although most of the clips mentioned above are too small to be displayed in a regular full screen mode as they lose much of their video quality then, it is worthwhile downloading the files in a video format to make the activities even more attractive to the class since the sound quality is preserved while the students will still have the advantage of watching the real people talking. If you lack video presentation facilities in your classroom allowing you to play the video files directly from the computer, one other option would be applying Audiograbber to capture and then play just the sound files. Still one other might be copying the videos from the computer onto a VHS tape and make use of a regular combination of a video player/recorder with a TV set to make the presentation possible. Yet, in that case, it is

advisable not to rely on the speakers from the TV set, unless it is a state-of-the-art device, but play the sound from the videotape via cable through some standalone HiFi or an amplifier to preserve initial quality of the recording and provide your students with as much degree of listening comfort as possible.

The piece of software I found worth recommending for the video capture purpose is HiDownload from http://www.streamingstar.com/, which makes it possible to download files, record RealMedia, Windows Media, MP3 streams as well as recently added QuickTime Streaming. As the streaming files' URLs are usually hidden behind JavaScript or ActiveX scripts, you are typically able only to save some *.ram address redirecting you to the actual file which is played live only and cannot be saved the way you normally do it to e.g. *.doc or *pdf files available on the Web. Yet, the program also features *URL Helper* to locate the actual files to record.

Picture 3. HiDownload main window

Once you have downloaded the software and installed it, you should start it to have a look behind the *Options* button to configure the programme al least to specify the location of your virus scanner and set up the download directory, which is C:\hidownload\ by default. When you start the programme (hit *Evaluate* button to start working with it due to its temporary 30-day licence), apart from the main window, you will see its icon residing in the tray and a bigger *Drop Target* icon (which you can disable by clicking the right mouse button on it and choosing the option) hanging on top of the screen in central location. That means you can now start your Web browser to locate the video files you want to record onto the hard drive of your computer. Once you find the link, use the right mouse button to choose the

Copy the URL/link option which activates the *add task* window (*see below*) with an automatically entered file source address.

Picture 4. 'Add task' window

Now, you have to click OK and watch the file download/record into the directory you specified to be able to locate it later (check for *Save to* option like in Picture 4).

Picture 5. Recording in progress

You can monitor the progress in the main window which pops up immediately (see Picture 5) until you see the whole file in the specified directory. One piece of advice on actually making use of the files is that although the session is saved in one directory, it leaves you with a wide confusing range of similarly named files including the video you wanted to have. Locating the right one is usually simple since it is usually the biggest file on the list with the extension '*.@@@1'. When you get rid of the extra extension (e.g. in MS Windows

Explorer or working directly with the files in the folder) and possibly some additional redundant numbers standing for the name of the session such as [1], [2], etc., the remaining should be your downloaded video file name with the proper extension depending on the type of the recorded file: *.rm, *wmv, *.asf, etc.

Finally, in case you do not like handling RealMedia or Windows Media files, an extra piece of software from the same site, namely *Digital Media Converter*, makes it easy for you to convert video and audio files from one format to another. Now you can organise and batch convert all your video and audio files between: VCD, DVD, AVI (DivX, MS MPEG4, uncompressed, etc), MPEG-1, MPEG-2 (PAL, NTSC), MP3, MOV, WMA, WMV, and WAV formats. Unfortunately, its availability is also limited to just 10 days after installation. Yet, you may try out one other option for converting only audio files for you might be dBpower AMP Music Converter available from: http://www.dbpoweramp.com.

References

More information on downloading streaming media:

http://all-streaming-media.com/streaming-media-faq/faq-streambox-vcr-download-problems.htm

More information on codecs:

http://www.free-codecs.com

Other recommended sites for downloading educational grade streaming media:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/multimedia/index.shtml

http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/songlyrics_frame.html

http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/poetry/outloud/

http://www.english-trailers.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FUTURE EVENTS

TECHNOLOGY FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

3rd annual conference Assessment Issues

Iowa State University, Ames, USA

September 30, 2005

http://www.iastate.edu/~apling/conf/tsll/2005/cfp.html

Keynote speaker: Professor J. Charles Alderson, Lancaster University, UK.

In conjunction with the conference of the Midwest Association of Language Testers (MWALT), where Susan Nissan, test developer extraordinaire at ETS, will be a guest speaker talking about the new Internet-based TOEFL.

We invite proposals for papers addressing the issues associated with assessment of language learning through technology and assessment of technology for second language learning. The following questions illustrate some of the themes at the intersection of TSLL and assessment:

- How can assessment of learning goals be conducted in CALL programs?

- How does the use of assessment in CALL affect students' learning?

- How can researchers assess the quality of the experience learners engage in for language learning when they use CALL?

- How does the use of technology for second language learning challenge assessment practices?

- How can concepts and methods from assessment help researchers to interpret data about performance on technology-assessed second language learning tasks?

Papers will be 20 minutes long with 10 minutes for discussion. Please submit a 200-word abstract to Volker Hegelheimer (volkerh@iastate.edu) by July 1, 2005. Please include your name, address, phone number, email address, and Web page address. You will be informed about acceptance by July 20, 2005.

Hosted by the Program in Teaching English as a Second Language/Applied Linguistics, Department of English, and the CALL Club, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. More info available at: http://www.iastate.edu/~apling/conf/tsll/2005/cfp.html

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EPORTFOLIO 2005

(EUROPEAN INSTITUTE FOR E-LEARNING (EIFEL))

Robinson College, Cambridge UK

October 27, 2005

http://www.eife-l.org/portfolio/ep2005

Following the success of two international conferences - Poitiers 2003, La Rochelle 2004 - and the national events in the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, ePortfolio 2005 conference will bring together experts and practitioners from all over the world to present and discuss progress in this rapidly developing field. This event, which is organised by EIfEL will once again bring together international experts in the domain to explore how this transformational learning technology can:

- develop reflective (deep) learning

- serve as a tool for lifelong learning

- contribute towards the achievement of holistic assessment

- encourage the development and recognition of individual competencies and learning outcomes

- make sense of the multitude of different initiatives aimed at promoting mobility and transparency of qualifications

- serve as a knowledge management tool for organisations and territories

- contribute towards social inclusion

This conference has become the most important in the ePortfolio community calendar. 2005 will celebrate the progress made in the international uptake of the ePortfolio and in achieving the goal of an ePortfolio for all. This years event will be opened by an ePortfolio plugfest, wholly devoted to the ePortfolio technology currently available, and focusing specifically on the challenge of interoperability, a key element in making the lifelong ePortfolio a reality. The call for papers and presentations is now open on the EIfEL portal: http://www.europortfolio.org.

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martine.legris@eife-l.org

ONLINE EDUCA BERLIN

Berlin, Germany

November 30 – December 2, 2005

http://www.online-educa.com/en/

The conference attracts over 1700 participants from more than 66 countries representing all continents, and thus is the world's largest international e-learning conference. Delegates are high-level decision makers from education, business and government - the three key areas driving e-learning adoption and innovation - making it the most important networking venue for experts, practitioners and newcomers from all over the world. Online Educa is the largest gathering of e-learning and distance education professionals in Europe, enabling participants to develop multinational and cross-industry contacts & partnerships, as well as to enhance their knowledge, expertise, and abilities.

The conference is held entirely in English and includes plenary sessions with world-class experts, smaller presentation and special focus sessions, practical demonstrations and debates on specific topics, as well as various informal networking opportunities where practitioners share their experiences, ideas, new information and perspectives. It features the work of more

than 367 speakers from 43 countries, addressing all forms of technology enhanced learning and includes a rich mix of themes, topics and a variety of session formats.

The event is accompanied by an exhibition and demonstration area where leading international e-learning manufacturers, suppliers and service providers present their latest products and services. Participants have come to value the exhibition as a central meeting point within the conference.

Themes of the conference include:

- E-Learning in Government, Private and Public Secto

- Transforming Traditional Universities with IC

- E-Learning: Design, Development and Delivery

- Open Source, Open Content and Online Learning

- Online Collaboration, Moderation, Teaching and Learning

- E-Learning as a Means to Support Inclusion

- Future Technologies and their Applications

- Policy Issues and Large Scale Take-up of E-Learning

- Quality Assessment, Measurement and Evaluation of E-Learning

- Understanding E-Learning and its Role in Society

PACCALL 2005 CONFERENCE

Yunnan University, Kunming, China

December 1-3, 2005

http://www.paccall.org/

The Second Pacific Association for CALL Conference (PacCALL) will be held at Yunnan University, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China from 1-3 December 2005. The theme for this year's conference is: CALL Directions: New Identities and New Communities.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

* Bernd Rueschoff, Univ. of Essen, Essen, Germany, President of EuroCALL

* Mike Levy, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Abstracts (max 250 words) for Papers (45 minutes); Demonstrations (45 minutes); and Posters sessions are now invited. Deadline for receipt of abstracts is 31 July, 2005.

There are two submission methods: Online proposal submission can be found at www.paccall.org and via e-mail - download paper form at www.paccall.org and send to: prop2005@paccall.org. All submissions will be acknowledged by e-mail. Successful applicants will be notified by August 15th, 2005.

Further details can be found via the PacCALL website http://www.paccall.org/

Thomas Robb, Kyoto Sangyo University, Japan
trobb@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp, http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/~trobb/index.html

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THE 53RD TEFLIN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2005

Yogyakarta, Indonesia

December 6-8, 2005

www.uad.ac.id/teflin

Main theme: "MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN INDONESIA: ISSUES AND CONCERNS"
Sub-Theme: Multilingualism; Language Acquisition; Multilingual Education

TOPIC AREAS

A. Multilingualism: from Theory to Practice

B. EFL Teaching and Learning and Multilingualism Context

C. Language Acquisition in a Multilingual Context

D. Standards for EFL teachers in bilingual and / or multilingual

Program

E. Establishing Bilingual Programs

F. Literary Works in the EFL Teaching and Learning

G. The practices TEFL Teaching in Indonesian Schools; Issues and

Concerns

H. ICT in EFL Teaching and Learning

I. Content and material development in multilingual education

J. Teaching Translation

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Website: <www.uad.ac.id/teflin>, E-mail: <teflinuad2005@yahoo.com>;

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

"Teaching English with Technology" (ISSN 1642-1027) is a quarterly electronic journal published by IATEFL Poland Computer Special Interest Group. The Journal deals mainly with issues of using computers, the Internet, computer software in teaching and learning languages.

The editorial board of "Teaching English with Technology":

- Jarek Krajka (Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland) – Editor-in-Chief (Articles, Lesson Plans, Software, On the Web)

- Jozsef Horvath (University of Pecs, Pecs, Hungary) – Editor (Articles, Book Reviews)

- Maria Jose Luzon de Marco (University of Zaragoza, Spain) – Editor (The Internet for ESP)

- Guo Shesen (Luoyang University, Henan, P.R China) – Editor (A Word from a Techie)

You can access the journal from the IATEFL Computer SIG website at this URL: http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm, where the past issues can also be accessed, downloadable as zipped .html or .pdf file.

The next issue of "Teaching English with Technology" will be published in October 2005. Submission deadline for the next issue is September 1, 2005. Detailed submission guidelines can be downloaded from http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/guidelines.doc.

We invite submissions covering the following categories:

- Article: articles describing classroom practice or discussions of work in progress, being of immediate relevance to teachers, or articles presenting case studies or work in progress

- The Internet for ESP: practical discussions of Web-based activities/classroom ideas for the ESP environment

- Lesson plan: plans of lessons done in the Internet or using computers, set in the reality of the education system, detailing the procedure, technical requirements, skills needed by students and teacher, together with URLs used in the lesson and any worksheets/checklists students are asked to complete

- On the Web: discussions of websites having potential for organising Internet lessons around them or relevant in some way to the field of English language teaching and learning

- Software: descriptions, evaluations and recommendations of widely available language learning software or articles pertaining to the use of software in language learning

- A Word from a Techie: discussions of applications of computer programmes to teaching English, outlining new possibilities given by software to the process of learning and teaching, explanations of technological issues

- Reports from Past Events: brief accounts of conferences, methodological workshops, commercial presentations, courses that relate to the field of using computer technology in teaching English

- Announcements of Future Events: as above, together with contact addresses.

We invite also works published elsewhere, but please give precise reference.

Please forward the following details with each submission:

- author(s) full name(s) including title(s)

- job title(s)

- organization(s) full contact details of all authors including email address, postal address, telephone and fax numbers.

Submissions should be sent by email as attachments to the Editor, Jarek Krajka, at jarek.krajka@wp.pl, with the subject being "Journal Submission." Please specify in the letter what word-processing program you are using, and preferably send .rtf version as well. All submissions undergo the process of blind peer review and are returned to authors with suggestions for changes/corrections.