LLTI HIGHLIGHTS

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In the past 8 months, the LLTI listserv and Facebook page have been active with many discussions, some technical tool questions, but much of the discussion on the LLTI listserv and in the IALLT Facebook page has centered around recent developments in Best Practices for language teaching and assessment, including continued discussions on placement testing. Here are just a few examples that garnered discussion within IALLT and on LLTI since April.

BEST PRACTICES (LLTI #10018)

Lisa Vorwerk, a new German teacher, raised four questions about applying best teaching practices: 1) templates for backward design, 2) Integrated Performance Assessment examples, 3) technology options for presentational mode, and 4) utilizing the community "C" from ACTFL's five Cs.

1) Backward Design: Lauren Rosen (University of Wisconsin-Madison) explained the steps of Backward Design as follows: a) determine what the students should be able to do when they are done with the lesson, b) determine how that ability will be assessed, c) determine activities that will assure scaffolding opportunities so that they are able to perform well in the assessment. Barbara Blankenship (UCLA) recommended the UCLA Language Materials Project site for both free lesson plans and discussions about lesson design and a downloadable form and she shared the Annenberg Learn website that offers lesson plans, as well as a methodology workshop.

2) Creating Integrated Performance Assessments: Lauren Rosen recommended the book "The Keys to Assessing Language Performance: Teacher's Manual" by Paul Sandrock, published by ACTFL. Marlene Johnshoy (University of Minnesota) referenced the sample IPAs on the CARLA Assessment website.

3) Presentational Mode: Marlene Johnshoy recommended blogs and wikis for writing and Voki, Voicethread, AudioBoo, and Vocaroo for speaking tasks. Lauren Rosen, however, suggested the following approach to identifying useful technology: a) determine what students need to demonstrate, b) develop a list of options for possible technologies they may use, c) let the student determine the tool to use. She also offered assistance in developing a list of tools that would suit a specific assignment.

4) Utilizing the Community "C" in the 5 Cs: Julia Stewart (Eastern University) advocated connecting with a classroom of people from the country whose life experiences are reflected within the text of a book or film that both classrooms read.

Lauren Rosen suggested: a) social action projects to connect students to the community where they live relative to a cause, b) create stories to share with younger children, c) use target language media to learn about communities beyond immediate area. She also also recommended referencing the ACTFL 21st Century Skills Map section on Social and Cross-Cultural Skills for ideas or inspiration for new ideas.

PLACEMENT AND PROFICIENCY TESTING (LLTI #1026, #10076, #10092, #10098)

Placement testing continued to be a "hot topic" on the LLTI listserv. In May, I sought to connect with individuals who had developed placement tests using SLUPE and who have developed a "testing the test" process, including testing with current students with the purpose of establishing test validity. I did receive personal responses from two members off-list as a result. In September, Helen Stapleton (Sewanee University of the South) asked for recommendations for placement tests. After John Verbick (University of Oklahoma) and Jack Burston (Cyprus University of Technology) both suggested looking into SLUPE (Saint Louis University Placement Exam), Helen then posted asking for product reviews of any of the available placement tests. In response, Jack Burston, offered the analysis that while SLUPE provides a platform for creation of computer-adaptive tests, and a database of questions created by colleagues elsewhere, it is best to create questions adapted to one's own students. He noted that the accuracy of any test is dependent on the accuracy of the difficulty levels assigned to the test questions and that this requires a question database which has already been statistically tested to validate the difficulty level of the test items with one's own students. He also notes that to establish the validity of test questions would require statistical analysis with approximately 500 students; however, the process inevitably leads to the need to create new test items which then must be tested through analysis, and so the testing process must continue until all questions are validated through analysis with one's own student body.

Erica Andree (Pacific University) inquired after an easily accessible proficiency test for Farsi to verify proficiency according to the CEFR A1, A2 & B1 levels. Mikle Ledgerwood (Samford University) suggested considering BYU's FLATS.

LANGUAGE RESOURCE MATERIALS

Many inquiries were about language resource materials that replaced older technology, sought new solutions for persistent learner challenges, asked for reviews of tools or looked for language-specific technical tool needs. Donnie Sendelbach (DePauw University) inquired (LLTI #10116) after Advanced French pronunciation materials that would be comparable to the software previously used, "The Rhythm of French: French Pronunciation Course for English Speakers" by Bernard Rochet. In response, Judy Shoaf (University of Florida)

reported that they have been using Dansereau, Savoir Dire (book + CDs). When Kellie Campbell (Saint Michael's College) asked for recommendations for pronunciation and grammar software (LLTI #10072), Alan Ng (University of Wisconsin-Madison) responded that he saw very effective results from using the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Syntax Untangler. After Ryan Brazell (University of Mary Washington) asked for feedback on using The Mixxer with 100-level courses (LLTI #10065), Laura Franklin (Northern Virginia Community College) expressed satisfaction with the tool, its learning opportunities and the administrator from Dickinson College. However, Keah Cunningham (University of Kansas) suggested also looking at the Language Practice Hangouts Community on Google+. In November, Andrew Ross (Arizona State University) requested recommendations for a chat application or site that displays both the pinyin entered and the Chinese characters generated (LLTI #10108). While no responses were generated that did this exactly, Keah Cunningham suggested using Google Play Pinyin tools and taking screen shots of pinyin input prior to sending.

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

The mobile technology posting that generated the most debate was Rob Freeman's (Delaware Technical Community College) request for recommendations for applications that would allow his iPad to connect wirelessly with his SmartBoard (#10062). Annelie Rugg (UCLA) suggested using an Apple TV; however, Peter Lafford (Arizona State University) warned that it may not be possible to connect to an Apple TV through a campus wireless network because of how they are often configured. Judi Franz (University of California, Irvine) reiterated the difficulty in using Apple TVs with university networks but her university solved the issue by setting up local networks for each Apple TV with a separate login and password. On the other hand, Lisa Vorwerk recommended the application Splashtop but there was no follow-up posting to verify if this app solved the issue.

On the Facebook group, Sharon Scinicariello (University of Richmond) requested recommendations for really good iPad apps for novice learners of Spanish. Her inquiry generated the suggestions of Duolingo, Linguascope Spanish Vocabulary Trainer, and Mindsnacks.com.

LEARNING MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

In August, Jack Burston sought recommendations for an online course platform, particularly for synchronous and asynchronous interaction with students (LLTI #10057). He clarified in a second post that they were already using Moodle but they needed a course platform that would seamlessly handle all aspects of their courses, including real-time interactive audio-video classes, synchronous and asynchronous student breakout sessions, internal text and audio-video communication, data gathering and sharing, and multiple platform accessibility including mobile devices. They were already considering e-Lecta and WizIQ. Cindy Martson of the Principia School suggested Canvas by Instructure.

Véronique Martin (University of Albany) sought suggestions for an online video management system to record, sort and store students' videos (LLTI #10091) and garnered a lot of responses. They had used www.audioportfolios.com and liked that students could create portfolios of videos that were easily accessible. Edwige Simon (University of Colorado at Boulder) suggested looking into both Youtube and WeVideo. Carly J. Born (Carleton College) noted that YouTube raises concerns about FERPA, and if one uses the Unlist or Private video option, then there are issues when asking students to submit videos by embedding them into a Moodle assignment. Erica Andree suggested using Private YouTube Videos and asking students to sign FERPA waivers or alternatively submit videos off-internet via USB. Thomas Plagwitz (University of North Carolina Charlotte) recommended looking at Kaltura, which they are currently using, and noted that it integrates with Moodle. Margo Burns (St. Paul's School) suggested simply having students submit videos to a shared Dropbox.

ADMINISTRATIVE TOOLS

There were a couple of inquiries about online registration tools. In August, I asked for recommendations for a calendar / registration tool that could be used to register students to take their placement test (LLTI #10054). Jonathan Perkins (University of Kansas) recommended Doodle while Erica Andree recommended SignUpGenius.com. On Facebook in September, Jörg Waltje (United Arab Emirates University) noted that he had been using Doodle for scheduling for some time but as they are transitioning to offering professional development workshops for all faculty on the UAEU campus, they are now offering too many workshops for the limitations and time-commitment involved in using Doodle.

Marlene Johnshoy responded suggesting SignUpGenius, while others suggested the use of Google Docs forms.

In November, Rachida Salama Primov (University of Miami) asked for experiences with either Movie Library Organizer Pro, IntelliScanner Daneizo or another comparable scanning system for checking out DVDs (LLTI #10112). Margo Burns suggested DeliciousLibrary. Adan Gallardo (Pomona College) responded that he has been using DeliciousLibrary for a couple of years, but noted that he preferred version 2 over the current update. On the other hand, Judy Shoaf reported that they use Primasoft Organizer Pro with a scanner and purchased barcodes with success.

As always, the shared "brain trust" of colleagues on the LLTI listserv and the IALLT Facebook group is invaluable in solving the range of issues inherent in language teaching, language assessment, learning technology and LRC management. At this seasonal time of thanksgiving and remembering the spirit of "Mitmenschen," I would like to offer all of you my continued thanks for your cherished friendship and your priceless professional generosity. I wish each and every one of you all the best in the New Year!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deanne Cobb-Zygadlo is the Director of the Language Resource Center at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. She researches and recommends new technologies for language teaching to language faculty members, manages the day-to-day operations of the LRC, supervises staff and also has responsibilities that include language program advocacy (as Co-ordinator of the KU World Languages Day), and participating in the development of K-12 teacher professional development programs. Personal interests include language assessment, 21st century learning, distance learning, gaming the classroom, and augmented reality. She has worked in the field of CALL and language center management since 2000, and holds a Master of Arts in German from the University of Calgary (Canada).

ABOUT THE COLUMN

LLTI Highlights is a column that examines current issues within the Language Learning & Technology International (LLTI) Listserv community.