Using technologies to support English language learning: Experiences from a three-year initiative

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Context

- Liberal Arts + Research
- Technology-rich
- Mostly traditional T&L
  - face-to-face
  - small classes
- English SL
- Curriculum reform
  - (Outcomes-based Approaches to Teaching and Learning – OBATL)
- English proficiency not just Skills
Outline

- Introduction
- T&L
- Curriculum reform + OBA
- Language learning
- New courses – Evidence!
- ePortfolios
- Impact
- The way forward

If you tell me, I will listen.
If you show me, I will see.
If you let me experience, I will learn.

Lao Tzu
Key issues

- **Role of teaching in a blended T&L**
  - Shift from being a presenter to being an organizer and facilitator
  - What the student **DOES** becomes **MORE IMPORTANT** than what the teacher does

- **Role of a student in a blended T&L context**
  - Crucial need to develop independent learning skills
  - Lingnan Graduate Attributes
    - “have both the capacity and the desire for life-long learning”
Good teaching and learning

Good teaching is getting most students to use higher cognitive level processes that more academic students use spontaneously (Biggs)

- **Surface learning**
  - do enough to pass the course
  - driven by assessment tasks (‘what do I have to do to pass?’)
  - extrinsic motivation

- **Deep learning**
  - student wants real understanding/ mastery
  - intrinsic motivation

- **ePortfolios can help**
  - student created, designed, and presented
Holistic design of the learning environment

Aligning the curriculum!

(McNaught, 2009)
English language curriculum

- English language is compulsory (6 credits)
- About 600 students – 15 teachers and 3 tutors
- Two courses
- Curriculum has been redesigned – not trivial
- Changing teacher AND student practice!
- Taking advantage of ALL the tools
Note:
- Four courses of compulsory English (12 credits) – two years
- Two courses of compulsory Putonghua (6 credits)
- Plus more language electives
Sample ILOs

- ‘make summary notes from spoken discourse and use them as input for discussion’

- ‘demonstrate an understanding of some ideas of a text by summarizing or paraphrasing these ideas accurately in your own words’

- ‘avoid plagiarizing original ideas from source materials when writing in an academic style’
Change was needed

- ALL students must do English
- Proficiency v’s skills
  - recent review
- Old portfolio system
  - workload unsustainable (for teachers!)
  - workload fragmented (for students!)
- New curriculum in 2012

http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/kids_more_likely_to_own_a_cellphone_than_a_book_study_finds.php
Life-Long learning

- Creation of content via multiple media
- Evidence of student learning outcomes

Product
- Creating
- Presenting
- Articulating
- Evaluating
- Reflecting

Process
- Assessment FOR learning

Portfolios
Portfolios

- Evidence
- Persistence
- Engagement
- History
- Sharing
- Artifacts
- Media
- Formal
- Informal
- Collaborating
‘e-portfolios benefit learning most effectively when considered as part of a joined-up teaching and learning approach, rather than as a discrete entity. … ‘

‘e-portfolios make progress and attainment more obvious to both teachers and students, because viewing and revisiting the repository of work reveals development, achievements, strengths and weaknesses’
Overview

- ePortfolio
  - provides evidence that **criteria** have been satisfied
- Artifact(s)
  - multiple forms of **media**
- Reflection
  - **Evidence** of student’s development
- Creativity (can this be assessed?)

More than a mere collection of documents
• **Using an ePortfolio platform**
  - Blogs/ text fields – for reflective writing
  - You Tube for media
  - Audio files
  - Facebook-like
  - Wall for feedback

• **Allows** variety of assessment artifacts

• **CAN** encourage student creativity

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If the only tool you have is a hammer...

...then everything looks like a nail!
Pedagogy

- Motivation
- Graduate outcomes
  - information literacy
- Reflection
- Assessment
  - Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS)
- Metacognition
- Creativity
- Is presentation important?
ePortfolios are not trivial

- They need to ADD value to the learning, not keep students busy
- They need considerable time to develop
- They need skills, understanding AND reflection
- Students need time to develop them
- Students need support and structure in order to attain the best outcomes
ePortfolio’s and assessment

- **Evidence** of student learning
  - writing – the reflection as part of the views
  - speaking – mp3 recording
  - listening – You Tube and audio files (mp3)
  - reading – interactions with content
  - presenting – video capture and YouTube

- **Management**
  - the wall or forums
  - feedback is crucial – modeling good practice!
Supporting student skills

- Using the skills of students ???
  - enormous variation, motivation, expectations, desire to learn
  - mass seminars (65%)
  - individual class lessons with teachers ……
  - Student Access Centre support

Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky)
A challenge, but about right

Too easy – wasting time

Too hard – learning to fail
Other support

- Hands-on staff workshops
- Online documents
  - staff and students
- Student Access Centre
- Examples/templates

http://sws-corp.com/cm/images/stories/support.gif
Mahara

- Open source (NZ)
- Integrates with …
- SSO with Moodle
- Sizeable community
- Standards
- MaHoodle
- Language@Lingnan
- Evidence of independent learning
Mahara for assessment
Student activity

ePortfolio
Evidence of student learning outcomes

Media Generation

Capture evidence

Upload evidence

Mobile devices
Notebooks
Computers

Present evidence
Evidence of developmental plans

Text Box
Learning Plan: Rationale and Reflection

(SUBMISSION 3 to e-portfolio in week 10)

Select one of the objectives from your learning plan and answer the following questions as fully as possible.

A. BEFORE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Learning Objective 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you want to improve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to be able to improve paragraph writing skills and reading skills. Writing a good essay with a wide range of vocabularies and sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you want to improve this aspect of English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to do book reviews and some essay assignments in my major subject, history. As well as I still need to write a short essay with several paragraphs in my coming mid-term examination. Improving my English writing skills is such an important and urgent thing for me in order to achieve a good academic result. Also, when I improve my writing capability by reading newspapers, it can improve my reading skills too. It will help me to understand the exam questions more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will you develop these skills? You can use a variety of resources and activities such as books, workshops, STS, WTS and videos. You may also visit the SAC to talk to a tutor about your learning plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text Box
Evidence:

An Image

An Image

An Image

Text Box
diary...

I have joined a drama society in my school recently and...
## SPQ measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surface</strong></td>
<td>Extrinsic: avoid failure but don’t work too hard.</td>
<td>Focus on selected details and reproduce accurately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example items in the SPQ</strong></td>
<td>• I find I can get by in most assessments by memorizing key sections rather than trying to understand them.</td>
<td>• I only study seriously what’s given out in class or in the course outlines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deep</strong></td>
<td>Intrinsic: satisfy curiosity about topic. Eager to achieve well.</td>
<td>Maximize understanding: read widely, discuss, reflect. Optimize organization of time and effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example items in the SPQ</strong></td>
<td>• I feel that virtually any topic can be highly interesting once I get into it.</td>
<td>• I find most new topics interesting and often spend extra time trying to obtain more information about them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approaches to learning

Deep Learning Approach

- Deep
- Shallow
Deep Learning Approach - 22.92%
- students scored above average in the deep approach scale, and scored average or below average in the surface approach scale.

Out of the n = 432

Surface Learning Approach - 23.61%
- students scored above average in the surface approach scale, and scored average or below average in the deep approach scale.
Different ways of working

Question 4: What is your opinion of using e-portfolios for LCE 101?

- 1. Hated it: 46
- 2. Didn’t like it: 141
- 3. Okay: 135
- 4. Liked it: 16
- 5. Loved it: 1

Figure 4.4 - Student Opinion on Using E-Portfolios (n=339)
Issues – it was not perfect

- less than 16% of students accessed any of the help files and only two-thirds of the students attended the briefing session

- both positive and negative impacts on student learning and motivation were observed

- when it worked – it worked very well!
ePortfolio management

- Clear expectations and DEMOS
- Drafts (?)
- ‘Clever’ feedback
  - Check regularly and use the F2F classes for discussion
  - early feedback – by citing student work
  - use the ‘wall’
  - peer feedback is an option
- Encourage and acknowledge creativity
Feedback – 2nd year

- Teacher – when the view is done well, my grading time is reduced by about 70%

- Opportunities for change
- Need to scaffold the students more fully
- Need to develop a level of assessment commensurate with effort
Shift
Third year - 2012

- Expectations have changed
  - what was new is now old

- Examples of good practice

- Teacher understanding

- Student understanding

Best student work – 2011
2012 student work

All that was new is now normal

STUDY PLAN

FIGHTING!!!!

LEARNING PLAN

DURING THE STUDY

Activities
1. Read the newspaper. Focus of small articles or just specific paragraph.
2. Using cell phone and e-dictionary to remember words.
3. Make flash cards.
4. Listen to VOA everyday.
5. Read and speak English as much as possible.
6. Learning in interesting ways such as remember words by computer games.
7. Listen to English songs.

AFTER STUDY

The things that worked well
1. Can understand the articles better.
2. Communicate with others more clearly.
3. Can read more articles.

The difficulties I faced
1. There are still many vocabulary I do not know which make me understand the articles.
2. There are some wrong with the lyrics of the songs.

Possible reasons for those difficulties
1. Cannot remember the words.
2. Did not read enough books or articles.
3. Did not be careful.

What I will do differently in future
1. Read more.
2. Practice more, especially the vocabulary.
3. Use more time to remember the vocabulary.
4. Be careful when I use English.

What other learning activities I plan to do
I will read more English books and magazines, such as TIMES. I will also try remember words by making flash cards, but I will spend more time on it. Of course, I will write to my foreign friends in English to practice skill.
Unintended outcomes

- Unintended outcomes
  - ALL students know how to use the platform

- Outcomes-based Approaches
  - new assessment strategies
  - ‘reflection’ is not just a word

- Other disciplines
  - Social Science - Health, Illness and Behaviour
  - Business - International Marketing (several student groups!)
  - Chinese – Chinese Opera
Future

- Research on the use of mobile devices
- Content creation
- Collaboration
- Evidence

Tablet computer market share
(Gartner, April 2012)
With thanks to the staff of CEAL and the Head of the Centre, Ms. Christine Shirley


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