E-learning in an EFL Linguistics Class

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In addition to skills courses, English majors in Taiwan are required to take content courses. At one university in Northern Taiwan, an introductory linguistics course *Introduction to English* (英語導論) is required of all first-semester freshman English majors. Content typically includes some basic facts about the history of English and its variation socially and geographically. In Fall Semester 2003 this course was taught using the university's e-learning platform as a supplement to in-class instruction. Students received three hours of face-to-face lectures each week, delivered in English by a native speaker, but reviewed material and took practice quizzes on-line before taking three in-class paper and pencil examinations. All written material was in English. Results of a questionnaire administered at the end of the course indicate that, despite some technical difficulties, students preferred this form of course delivery over traditional lectures only. This paper will discuss some of the issues involved and problems encountered as well as the questionnaire results.

When we use the terms EFL and computers in the same sentence, we most often think of CALL and using some aspect of computer technology for teaching or enhancing English language skills. Increasingly, however, Taiwan's students are accessing content knowledge, in their future area of expertise or in an area of recreational interest, in English. This has long been the case for college students majoring in English—it is not unreasonable to study *British Literature* or the *History of the English Language* in English. It is only recently that the controversial idea of teaching tertiary level content courses not related to English *in* English has arisen here in Taiwan. Whether or not that pedagogy can prove effective if the course design is grounded in sound research and if sufficient multimedia and on-line support is given is yet to be determined. Here we are concerned with a less contentious idea—taking a course for English majors already taught in English and supplementing in-class instruction with an e-learn component.

This paper is divided into two main sections. After giving background information on the course and the web platform, a description of how the on-line components were developed is given. In the second part, student reactions to the site and their suggestions for its improvement are presented.

BACKGROUND OF THE COURSE

At National Tsing Hua University in Northern Taiwan, *Introduction to English* is a three-credit required course for incoming freshman majoring in English and is offered in the fall semester each year. Students and teacher meet three hours a week for traditional classroom instruction. I have been teaching the course only once every three or four years; usually one other professor teaches it. The text chosen by the regular teacher includes excerpts from David Crystal's huge and comprehensive tome *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (1995), supplemented by portions of the videos from *The Story of English* (1985). I saw no reason to change these texts. I had been using *The Story of English* previously when I taught this course and I also had the transcripts for all the videos.

When I was again scheduled to teach the course in fall semester 2003, I decided to incorporate e-learn, NTHU's web-learning platform, for the course. I had had the use of e-learn for two previous semesters for listening courses, but it was only toward the end of the second that I began to see the real potential and incorporate it into my teaching. Nevertheless, I had been using it for out of class listening assignments, and now I would be using it for a content course and wanted to make it an essential part of the course. Thus another reason for using the same texts as my colleague emerged: he could also use e-learn when he taught the course the following year.

I had also made a decision the previous year to make my classes nearly paper-free, developing my own website and providing as much material on-line as possible. Thus I was already familiar with preparing HTML documents (using Microsoft's Front Page), uploading files, and using the e-learn system. While I had an assistant assigned for e-learn, one of our MA students, I wanted also to know how to operate every phase of the process. I had much to learn because in the previous year, my previous assistant set up all the basic pages, and I was comfortable with her design. As I had to prepare my own teaching materials anyhow, uploading and linking them took only another minute. I left my assistant to upload the quizzes and take care of more time-consuming tasks. (I had another assistant to help in teaching content; he ran discussion sessions in Chinese and also communicated with students using e-learn, but he had no responsibility for the operation of e-learn.)

As the course is required for undergraduate English majors, all majors are enrolled. In fall 2003 there were 50 students. Additionally, there were students who had become or were aspiring to become double majors or minors in English, most of whom were students in the departments of Chinese Literature or Humanities and Social Sciences. There were also a few who had failed the course previously and some transfer students making up requirements. There were 68 students enrolled; the majority (54/68) were female.

WHAT IS E-LEARN?

E-learn is a Microsoft compatible (Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher) interactive learning platform developed under the unix operating system through Wisdom Master 2.4. Teachers can upload course material, create different exam types (multiple choice, matching, etc.), track students' use of the pages, and collect their scores from on-line exams. Students can access course materials, assignments, and exams and check on their own progress (such as their scores from on-line tests). Students, teachers, and auditors can use the bulletin board and on-line chat. While the default navigation language is Mandarin Chinese, under Personal Tools one can switch the language to English.

Figure 1. Opening Page of E-learn Site Requesting Log-in

National Tsing Hua University initiated the system in Spring 2002, in the middle of the semester. Each department was and still is limited to initiating two courses per semester. For each course proposed, the university has provided NTD 30,000 to pay a student assistant. At the beginning of each semester, a three-hour introductory session is provided for both teacher and assistant.

THE COURSE *INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH* ON THE E-LEARN SITE

The e-learn system gives teachers a template to which to add the course syllabus and course information. Teachers can arrange content material they wish to upload any way they like (the course content menu for *Introduction to English* is shown in Appendix A). As with other websites, teachers have to remember to separately upload any embedded files, such as pictures and sound files. Essentially, if one is familiar with the system of links for any FTP site, then organizing one's material on e-learn is straightforward.

The most important reason I had for choosing to use e-learn was to make certain that students could have access to all course materials I would be using. I am a native speaker of English; the first language of my students is Mandarin or in some cases another Chinese language. Content courses for English majors are routinely taught in English; nevertheless, I wanted to give these new freshmen every opportunity to review the course material. It is not my teaching style to lecture page by page from a textbook; I skip some paragraphs or sections and add other material not in the textbook.

The class would already be multimedia—in addition to listening to my lecture, students could also read generally the same material in their textbooks. We would use parts of the videos from *The Story of English*, I would comment on the relevant sections, and students would have access to the transcripts of the video excerpts we used. Additionally, as the course was taught in a language laboratory, I would be able to use Power Point to accompany my lectures. Since it was a content course with 68 students, lecture style was the most reasonable choice.

Power Point and Graphics

Initially, I thought my primary use of e-learn would be to upload my Power Point lectures (for excellent advice on how to make effective Power Point slides, see http://www.actden.com/pp/index.htm, 1998) after class and also to put up the transcripts of the videos we used in class. It would be impossible to upload the videos first because of copyright restrictions and also because of size. E-learn limits the size of any file uploaded to 2MB. However, students could review the videos in the self-access AV lab.

[f], [v]	labio-dental
[θ], [ð]	interdental
[s], [z]	alveolar
[ʃ], [ʒ]	palatal or palato-alveolar
[h]	glottal

Figure 2. Phonetic Symbols Inserted into a Table and Saved as a Picture File

A problem all linguists encounter has to do with fonts, particularly in the form of phonetic symbols or symbols from other writing systems. One may have all the proper symbols installed on one's own computer, but all bets are off when you open your file on another computer. I was using the computer in one language lab classroom and got used to my symbols turning up on the screen as scissors or some other funny symbol. In class I could just laugh and write the correct symbol on the board, but the problem also came up on the web, and e-learn was not at all friendly to phonetic symbols. A colleague suggested I use PDF files with embedded fonts, but that solution seemed too complex for a few symbols. Instead, I avoided the symbols when I could, as in the on-line quiz on the Sounds of American English, where I asked students to describe those symbols that were the same as in the alphabet (e.g. [g], [u]), saving the more unusual ones for the paper and pencil test produced on my own reliable computer. In other cases, when I really wanted to show the symbols through the computer in-class or on-line, I made charts which I saved as JPG (picture) files.
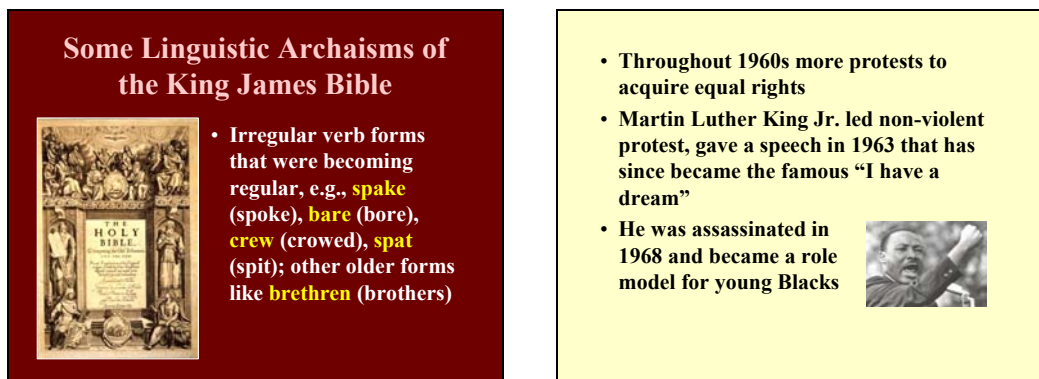

Figure 3. Relevant Scanned Images Added to Power Point Slides

However, as I got more involved in the course and in preparing the lectures, I found that I wanted to add more color to my Power Point slides. I had been using Clip Art, but now I started adding maps and pictures, primarily scanned from the original *Cambridge History of the English Language* (1995) and the textbook accompanying *The Story of English* (1986, 1993) videotapes. I could, of course, have just taken the books to class and shown the pictures and maps on the projector, but it was a lot more convenient for me to connect the picture or map with the related Power Point slide, and students would be able to view and review the related images when they accessed the class notes on-line. The inclusion of the graphics livened up the essentially text-laden slides (Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldono, 1999).

Sound Files

Linguistics is concerned with language, and language is primarily spoken. Thus, I found myself preparing and uploading sound files. Areas covered in the course include an overview of the history of English and also how English varies around the world. I regularly teach *History of the English Language* (required for linguistics concentration) and *Varieties of English* (elective) for third and fourth year English majors, and thus I have a lot of supplementary audio material. My samples of how Old and Middle English probably sounded were stored on audiotape, while my extensive examples of varieties of world English were stored on audio and videotape.

Fortunately, a few months previous in summer, with the goal of digitizing my extensive vinyl record collection, I learned how to turn analog audio to digital audio. Essentially, if you can plug in a microphone into your computer and record your own voice, you can use a

tape player in place of the microphone and record digitally in your computer the analog audio playing on the tape player. The only adjustment needed is some calibration of the volume controls on the tape player for output and on the computer recording input for line in/microphone (whichever input you are using).

All computers made within the past few years have built-in sound cards and provide some recording software that also permits you to save in a choice of formats. For uploading to the internet, saving in MP3 is a good choice. On average, one minute takes about 1MB of storage; with the 2MB limit to the size of any file on e-learn, I sometimes had to break sound files into two parts.

For digitizing the audio from a videotape, the simplest approach is to run the audio line from the VCR into the tape player's LINE IN, record the audio on audiotape, then digitize as you would any audiotape. Sometimes you can run the audio line from the VCR directly into your computer (via LINE IN or microphone). In principle, it should work; in practice, sometimes it does not work. Note that to digitize the video track, an additional interface is needed, either in the form of a video card or some other hardware. One could also digitize the video and then separate out the audio track, but since it is somewhat more complex to work with and edit video files, the inexperienced should just work with the simpler audio input and editing to produce sound files.

When working with sound files, I learned many things by experience. For example, I knew that when working with HTML files, any graphics have to be uploaded separately, so I correctly assumed the same for sound files. However, I was surprised to find that pictures and other images are saved along with Power Point files, but sound files are not. Thus if you copy a Power Point file from your computer to an external hard drive and take it to class for use with another computer, the pictures and graphics come along but the sound files do not (unless you upload and link them separately into the same hard drive). The same is true with uploading Power Point files to the Internet. Thus I found it easier to incorporate sound files within HTML files; also I had more space to put in any text. For example, when giving an example of a reading of the first section of the *Prologue to Canterbury Tales*, I wanted the sound files to play while students could read along from the text on the screen. Similarly, when listening to international varieties of English, I wanted students to be able to view the transcript. Below is an example of two Power point slides about the speech characteristics of Indian English linked to an HTML file containing the text of a sound file of an excerpt of Indian English and a link to click to hear the file while following along in the transcript.
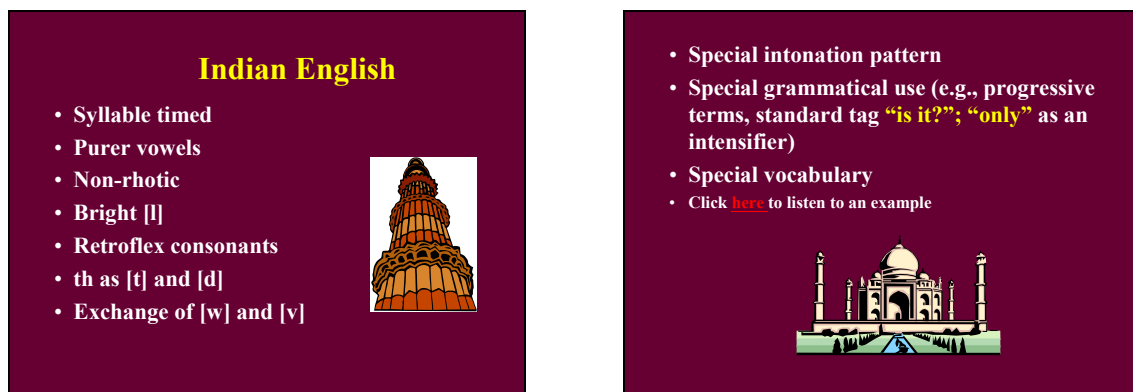

Figure 4. Two Slides Explaining the Features of Indian English with a Link to the Sound File with Text

Figure 5. Text and Sound File to Which the Previous File on Indian English Links

Quizzes

While I could upload Power Point, HTML, and sound files to my own web pages and even set practice quizzes using *Hot Potatoes*, controlling student access to quizzes (setting time limits, number of times to take the quiz, etc.) would be much more difficult. Moreover, in order to collect and keep track of student scores, I would need to add some server functions to my computer. E-learn had a quiz function built in. It could grade the quizzes and record the students' scores.

Using the e-learn quiz function would be easy provided I kept the question types simple; except for one matching, the other ten quizzes consisted of multiple choice questions. This choice was reasonable because I had decided to give three in-class exams, all of which would be in primarily multiple choice format, with some matching and fill-in. I do not require freshmen in a content class to answer test questions in essay format in English; with such a large class, it would also be self-punishment. College freshman may not be too familiar with the multiple choice format in English, so I also wanted to give them some practice. Similarly, three exams are better than two because students have two more chances to improve if they do not study effectively for the first exam—and the course content does breakdown nicely into three parts.

I had decided to make each of the three in-class exams worth 25% of the grade, and scores on the total of the ten 10-point quizzes to count as the other 25%. The first quiz was on the phonetic descriptions of the sounds of modern American English. At this point I was not too familiar with all the functions of setting quizzes on e-learn (see Appendix B for the teacher's quiz set-up page). I included 20 questions of which 10 would come up randomly for each student. However, I did not set any limit on the number of times each student could take the quiz nor on the amount of time, and some took it over and over until they scored 10 points. Clearly, this would not do; the rest of the quizzes were set to be taken one time only and limited to five minutes allotted time. The scores from the first quiz were not included, and ten more quizzes were made. Additionally, we set the last day to take each quiz as midnight of the day before the in-class exam on that material.

For each quiz, 20 – 30 questions were set, 10 of which would come up randomly for each student. While scores on the first in-class exam were what I had expected, with eight students scoring under 60, four above 90, and the rest nicely spread between 60 and 90 (average score 74.78); on the second exam I was surprised to see that over half the class had scored above 90 (average score 89.34). For this exam I had taken nearly all the test questions from the quiz question pool, and clearly the students had access to all the questions. I later discovered that each student could print out his own quiz, and when they worked together, they could gather nearly all the questions.

Therefore, as I was writing the quiz questions for the third exam, I also wrote alternate questions, asking the same question in a somewhat different way so that the answer might differ. Other portions of the exam included other types of questions, such as matching and fill-in-the-blank, which asked about the same material but in a different way. Additionally, students had to identify the variety of English of 10 speech samples (for 10 points). Thus students had to understand the material, not just repeat something they had memorized. The resulting range of scores was more evenly distributed, with five under 60, six over 90, the rest between 60 and 90 (average score 76.34). This was more in line with what I had expected, with most students showing improvement by a few points over the first exam. The final grades were a little higher than some of the students may have deserved due to the high scores on the second exam, but it was a small price to pay for all I learned in using the e-learn platform.

Quiz scores also showed the expected variation among students, with the best students consistently scoring 9 or 10 (out of 10) on each quiz. Most students averaged between 6 and 7. Particularly after the first exam, after students had practice with four quizzes (the Sounds of Modern American English, whose scores were not considered, and three others), students recognized that they had to study before taking the quizzes to get a higher score, and there were fewer really low scores between 0 – 4. There seemed to be little pooling of resources for quizzes as scores tended to be generally similar to scores on the first and third exams.

The big problem we had with quizzes was that sometimes, while students were taking a quiz, e-learn or their computer shut down, a score of 0 was recorded, and students were not allowed to take the quiz again since they were already recorded as having taken it. This was an honest complaint as it happened both to good students as well as to others. Often students were taking the quizzes just a few days before the exam, so it was not possible to make these up before the exam. My solution was, after the exam, to check the e-learn quiz scores and find whose scores were recorded as zero, then take 10 of the questions from each quiz and make paper and pencil quizzes. I then asked the students in question to make up those missing quizzes the day after the exam. Each time, about ten students had to make up a quiz in this manner. Students seemed to accept this solution.

Discussion Board and Chatroom

Unfortunately, we did not use the discussion board and chatroom facilities to full advantage. Some students did post questions, either in English or Chinese, and sometimes a short discussion ensued. To specific questions addressed to the teacher, either the teacher or the assistant responded. Over the semester there were a total of 43 postings; many of these were announcements or reminders from the teacher or assistant.

Some students attempted to use the chat function but there was seldom another person on-line. Before the first exam, the class assistant arranged a one-hour time slot in the evening to be in the chatroom, but he reported a low level of participation and did not continue. The number 55 listed as discuss times indicates also the false starts, including times when there was no one with which to discuss.

Student Use of E-learn for the Course *Introduction to English*

Data collected by the NTHU Computer Center shows that students spent a lot of time using e-learn (data includes time spent also by auditors and the teachers). Attendance records how many times students logged in and actually viewed some content pages, not just log-in times (3594). Three students attended over 100 times. A total of 7980 pages were viewed, with 29 students viewing over 100 pages. In total, students spent 1149 hours on e-learn over the course of the semester. Interestingly, those students who spent the most time did not necessarily get the highest test scores. Indeed, several of those with the highest scores spent only a few hours on e-learn. This may mean that the good students were more efficient in their study time; instead of studying the material on-line, they downloaded it and reviewed it at their convenience.

Attendance	View pages	View hours	Post times	Discuss times
3594	7980	1149:08:07	43	55

Table 1. Student Use of E-learn for Introduction to English

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

At the end of the last full class of the semester, students were given a two-page questionnaire about e-learn to complete (all items appear in the discussion section and thus are not listed separately in an appendix). Part one contained 17 questions, each of which asked students to indicate an answer on a five-point likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Part two contained seven open-ended questions and an eighth requesting any additional comments. The questionnaire was in English, but students could use either English or Chinese to answer the open-ended questions. A total of 46 students completed the questionnaire, while 22 students were either absent or chose not to take part.

Ease of Use

One issue of concern was how students were able to adapt to using the e-learn site. While we tend to think of young people today as being computer literate, that literacy may not extend beyond using e-mail and surfing the net. The majority were also female and language majors; at least in stereotype both groups are considered to be less interested in interacting with technology. Most importantly, these were new freshmen facing many new challenges at the same time, and navigating e-learn was just one more challenge.

As expected, there were some difficulties with students being able to log on to e-learn during the first few weeks. To some extent, this is always the case. Those students pre-registered for the course had already had their names registered in the e-learn course; that meant all freshmen listed under regular student (excluding special categories as overseas, physically handicapped, etc.) and a few others who had pre-registered. After this time, the teacher has to sign in the students herself, a very simple process of just adding the student's school ID number. There is always some chaos during the first two weeks as students "shop" for courses and may not be aware of important announcements; moreover, students add and drop so quickly that the class lists on the internet are not always up to date. In one particular case, e-learn would not recognize a student number I added; we discovered later that the student had not yet activated her e-mail account with the school and, hence, no computer recognized her student ID.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. I had some trouble using e-learn at the beginning.	01(2%)	12(26%)	16(35%)	14(30%)	03(7%)
5. E-learn was easy to use.	12(26%)	31(67%)	02(4%)	01(2%)	00(0%)
9. I had trouble downloading the e-learn materials.	01(2%)	06(13%)	12(26%)	17(37%)	10(22%)
12. E-learn was too troublesome to use.	01(2%)	01(2%)	04(9%)	28(61%)	12(26%)
13. Using e-learn took too much time.	00(0%)	01(2%)	14(30%)	24(52%)	07(15%)

Table 2. Ease of Use of E-learn (total = 46, percentage rounded off)

As can be seen from item 2 in Table 2, while 28% of students (combining Strongly Agree and Agree) reported some trouble using e-learn at the beginning, item 5 "E-learn was easy to use" shows that they did eventually learn to use it as 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the item). For item 9, while 15% of students reported some difficulty downloading materials, 59% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they had trouble downloading the materials. A possible explanation may be that in any general grouping there will always be some people who have more difficulty operating mechanical devices.

Items 12 and 13 were aimed at finding out whether students considered their use of e-learn to be a waste of time; 87% disagreed with the statement "E-learn was too troublesome to use." Concerning the statement, "Using e-learn took too much time," 67% disagreed, yet 30% responded with neutral. Perhaps this response means that while it took some time, they may have felt that the time was well spent. Only one respondent thought using e-learn took too much time.

In addition, two other open-ended questions were asked concerning the use of e-learn.

1. NTHU controls the basic structure of e-learn. Are there aspects of the general e-learn system you would change? How?
7. What was your greatest problem with e-learn?

As nearly all of the responses to the second question had to do with the structure of e-learn, I will present the responses together. Several students mentioned that the system was often unstable, that it was sometimes hard to log in, and that the system sometimes stopped while the student was taking a quiz, rendering his score zero. One mentioned that sometimes a few letters or even whole words on the quiz were cut off so the student was unsure how to answer the question (this happens with many materials on e-learn). Some said downloading of materials was too slow and not always successful, while another said the toolbar on top of the screen was confusing and had confusing links. Another thought the directions for using the discussion board were confusing. A few others referred to some difficulty with navigation.

Most interesting were two comments on protecting students' personal information. The teacher has access to students' scores, but the other students do not. I suspect, therefore, that these students are referring to information they inputted about themselves when they first logged in and registered, and this data is available to the other students. The system does ask for address, phone number, e-mail address, and the like, and the new freshmen were honest; some older students left these blank and could still log in. If the system is not changed, the teacher could tell students this information will be public and to answer only what they want to be made public.

Motivation

How did students feel about having course content on e-learn? In Table 3 we see that to item 1 "I liked using e-learn," only one student disagreed; 80% strongly agreed or agreed, while 17% responded neutral. A full 86% (40 out of 46 respondents) disagreed with the statement "This course would be better without e-learn." Item 17 specifically asked about motivation, and 68% agreed that the e-learn materials increased their motivation to learn the material, while 28% were neutral.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I liked using e-learn.	14(30%)	23(50%)	08(17%)	01(2%)	00(0%)
10. This course would be better without e-learn.	02(4%)	01(2%)	03(7%)	20(43%)	20(43%)
17. The e-learn materials increased my motivation to learn the material.	05(11%)	26(57%)	13(28%)	01(2%)	01(2%)
11. Other courses should also use e-learn.	05(11%)	16(34%)	22(48%)	03(7%)	00(0%)
16. If e-learn were used for another course, I think I would enjoy taking the course.	02(4%)	17(37%)	22(48%)	04(9%)	01(2%)

Table 3. Motivation and E-learn (total = 46, percentage rounded off)

However, to the statement "Other courses should also use e-learn," students were a little less certain, with 45% agreeing and 48% neutral. Similarly, to "If e-learn were used for another course, I think I would enjoy taking the course," 41% agreed while 48% were neutral. This may mean that while students are generally positive about e-learn, they are aware that the success of the course may depend on the kind of material being taught and just how e-learn is incorporated into that course.

The questionnaire also contained two general open-ended optional questions.

5. What did you like best about e-learn?
6. What did you like least?

Here we look at those responses that relate to motivation and save those dealing with features of the site for the next section.

Of those who responded, many liked best the opportunity to download materials and review them. Others liked the quizzes because they helped student study for the exams or forced students to study harder. Some also liked using the discussion board function. One student liked least the time limit enforced (5 minutes) on taking each quiz, while another said she was not used to studying from a computer screen. Other least liked responses related either to the structure of the e-learn platform or the design of the course materials and are discussed in those respective sections.

Features of the Site

The feature that students liked by far was the capability to download the Power Point slides (and other course materials, too, as indicated in the open-ended question on what they liked best); 74% strongly agreed and 26% agreed.

All respondents agreed that the quizzes helped them study for the test (87% strongly agree, 13% agree). Interestingly, though, 54% disagreed and 26% strongly disagreed with the statement "the quizzes should not be required." It would seem that forcing students to complete the quizzes was a necessary discipline that guaranteed they would study for the quizzes and, hence, the subsequent exam and thereby receive a passing score.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. I liked having the Power Point slides after each lecture.	34(74%)	12(26%)	00(0%)	00(0%)	00(0%)
7. The quizzes helped me to study for the test.	40(87%)	06(13%)	00(0%)	00(0%)	00(0%)
14. The quizzes should not be required.	01(2%)	01(2%)	07(15%)	25(54%)	12(26%)
3. The design (colors, size of text, etc.) of the web pages was good.	09(20%)	29(63%)	07(15%)	01(2%)	00(0%)
8. The sound files (Old English sounds, varieties of English) were useful.	04(9%)	22(48%)	18(39%)	01(2%)	01(2%)

Table 4. Features of the Course Site (total = 46, percentage rounded off)

In general, students thought the design of the pages was good (83%), but in order to get some more specific suggestions that I could easily incorporate, the following open-ended question was included.

4. Please comment on the design of the materials (size, color, etc.)? How would you change it?

A number of students commented on font size, indicating that the size, especially on the Word files, was too small. The only files in Word were the excerpts from the transcripts of the *Story of English*; I had been using paper versions in Times Roman 12 point with students in the past and merely uploaded those portions we were using. In future, I can change these to HTML or even PDF format.

A few students also mentioned color, expressing a desire for lighter backgrounds on Power Point files, although others suggested brighter and more exciting colors and even animations. While I tried to vary the colors between files, sometimes light on dark, other times dark on light, I suspect that when students printed out the slides, they preferred a light background.

With regard to the sound files (sounds of Old and Middle English, world varieties), 57% said they were useful, while 39% answered neutral. Perhaps those neutral respondents changed their opinion after the final exam, on which 10% of the questions referred to the sound files. Unfortunately, it seems impossible to incorporate the sound files in on-line quizzes with e-learn. On the open-ended question concerning other materials (#3 below), two students indicated they would like more sound files illustrating varieties of English and different pronunciations.

Two open-ended optional questions were included on the questionnaire addressing the content of the site.

2. What is your opinion of the content of the materials? How would you change it?
3. What other kinds of materials would you like to see on this kind of web site?

Answers to these questions overlapped. Most responses indicated the content was okay, though two students requested more detailed content. Suggestions for other materials included references to other relevant websites and videos (although I had explained the e-learn file size limitation to them in addition to copyright restrictions). An alternative may be to use excerpted sound files smaller than 2MB from the videos, accompanied by the transcript and some still images extracted from the video. It is technically possible but legally questionable.

Some other respondents, taking the question beyond our course, indicated they would like to science and literature and other materials. This is a good sign because they can see the potential. Perhaps it was one of these students who responded to another question with the regret that he could not view the content of other courses being taught on e-learn (the teacher can choose whether or not to allow auditors into the site).

General Attitude toward Effectiveness

All 46 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to "E-learn helped me to learn the course material." One wonders what answer those who did not attend the class that day would have given; perhaps they were unmotivated, or they felt they could learn enough from the materials posted on e-learn and did not need to come to class!

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. E-learn helped me to learn the course material.	23(50%)	23(50%)	00(0%)	00(0%)	00(0%)
15. I learned a lot from the e-learn web pages.	10(22%)	28(61%)	08(17%)	00(0%)	00(0%)

Table 5. General Attitude toward the Effectiveness of the Site (total = 46, percentage rounded off)

Of the respondents, 83% answered positive to the statement "I learned a lot from the e-learn web pages," while 17% gave neutral answers. Some of these responses may be the result of the wording of the statement, indicating that they learned very little that was "new" from the web pages, as almost everything uploaded had already been presented in class.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the teacher for the course *Introduction to English* in which the E-learn platform was incorporated, I felt a tremendous sense of achievement despite all the hard work. Setting up the course took a lot of time, but the second time around will involve only modification and addition to the existing materials. A review of the students' questionnaires indicates that overall students, too, had a positive experience in using e-learn. Nevertheless, there are still some unanswered questions. For example, 22 students did not respond to the questionnaire, either through absence or through choice. It is unknown whether these people would have given different, possibly more negative responses.

It might be interesting to compare statistically the amount of time students spent using e-learn with their exam scores on the course. A cursory look shows that those with the highest grades spent relatively lower amounts of time on-line, whereas some of those who spent the most time on-line had somewhat lower scores, although they still passed the course.

Another complicating factor is the use of English for all materials as none of the students had English as their first language. It is generally considered good pedagogy to present

materials in several formats to give students more opportunities to understand and review. Students in the class had achieved a certain score on the English portion of the Joint College Entrance Exam to qualify to be English majors or majors in Humanities and Social Sciences/Chinese Language. However, this exam has no listening section, yet the course lectures were presented in English. The range of students' English ability could be said to range from intermediate/high intermediate to low advanced/advanced; there is still much individual variation. Did all of these students have enough English ability to benefit from presentation of the course materials in different formats but all in English?

CALL as an area of study came into prominence long after I had completed my formal university study. I learned how to use a computer in Taiwan and thereafter have been completely self-taught. However, I've always enjoyed using audiovisual equipment in my teaching and, with the shift from analog to digital format, a new area has opened up for creating AV materials on the computer. For me, the Internet simply provides a new medium for presenting audiovisual materials in order to make course content more exciting to the students.

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Appendix A Current Structure of the E-learn Website for Introduction to English

- Introduction
- The Teachers
- Syllabus
- Chapter 1--Indo-European Languages
- Chapter 1--The Sounds of Modern American English
- The Sounds of Modern American English
- The Indo-European Languages
- Chapter 2--Story of English--Indo European and Germanic
- Chapter 2--Celts, Romans, and the Coming of the Germanic Tribes
- Chapter 3--Celtic and Latin Influence on Old English
- Chapter 3--Old English Grammar
- Chapter 3--The Sounds of Old English
- Chapter 3--Story of English--Old English--The Language
- Chapter 3--The Scandinavian Influence on Old English
- Chapter 3--Story of English--The Coming of the Danes
- Old English
- Chapter 4--The Norman Conquest, the Decline of French, and the Rise of English
- Chapter 4--Middle English Pronunciation
- Chapter 4--The French Influence on English Vocabulary
- Chapter 4--Middle English Grammar
- Chapter 4--Listen to the Prologue to Canterbury Tales
- Chapter 4--Story of English--Middle English
- Middle English
- Chaper 5--Early Modern English
- Chapter 5--The Influence of Shakespeare and the King James Bible
- Chapter 5--Story of English--Shakespeare and the King James Bible
- Chapter 5--Changes in Early Modern English
- Shakespeare and the King James Bible
- Changes in Early Modern English
- Chapter 6--The Early Development of American English
- Chapter 6--Story of English--English Goes to North America
- Early American English
- Chapter 7--The Spread of American English
- Chapter 7--Additions to the Vocabulary of American English
- Chapter 7--The Influence of Immigration on American English
- Chapter 7--The Influence of Black English on American English
- Chapter 7--Story of English--Influence of Scots Irish on American English
- Chapter 7--Story of English--American English
- Chapter 7--Story of English--The Influence of Black Americans on English
- Further Influences on American English
- Chapter 7--Spelling Differences Between American and British English
- Chapter 7--Pronunciation and Grammar Differences Between American and British
- Chapter 7--Vocabulary Differences Between American and British English
- Chapter 7--Language Variation
- Chapter 7--Variation in English around the World
- Chapter 7--Listen to Englishes around the World
- Differences between American and British
- Chapter 8--Social Variation in Language
- Chapter 8--Listen to a Report on Internet English
- Language Variation
- Chapter 9--The Writing System
- Chapter 10--The Development of Dictionaries
- the Writing System and the Development o
- Answer Key for Test 3

Appendix B Quiz Setup Page on E-Learn

| Save | Page. 1 | ▾ | Last ten | Next ten | Delete | Insert | Percentage |

▸ Add new test

Setup

Test >
[   ]

Usage >
Self-evaluation ▾

Instruction >
[Directions]

Frequency > ☐ Exam can be taken only once

Time limit(0 is not limited) >
Time limit
[0] Minute

Other:
☑ Spontaneous answer key
☐ Only student allowed.
[More setup]

Exam open and expired date:
Example: 2000/02/03 20:50
From [   ]
To [   ]

Percentage > [0] %

Calculating way >
Count the average ▾

Question setup

◉ Item 1   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 2   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 3   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 4   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 5   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 6   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 7   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 8   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 9   Question statement [   ]

○ Item 10   Question statement [   ]