E-Learning

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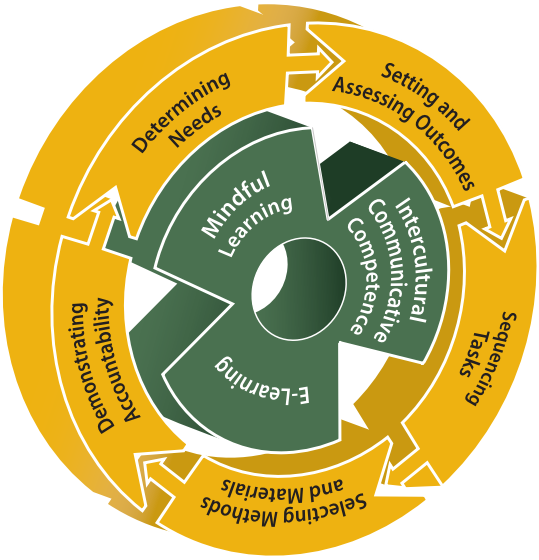
ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework



Government of Alberta

ATESL
Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language

Section 8: E-Learning

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Overview

E-learning is gaining momentum across Alberta as English language curriculum developers and instructors recognize the benefits of incorporating educational technologies[1] into their programs. In this section of the *ATESL Curriculum Framework,* we

- Highlight the key considerations for integrating e-learning into ESL curricula.
- Identify the guiding principles for designing tasks and selecting effective assessment strategies that incorporate educational technologies.
- Present principled e-learning and teaching practices.

Why e-learning in ESL?

> *"Few language teachers would dare to admit that they are not interested in technology, at least as support of the language curriculum, for fear of being classified as outdated or out of touch with best practices."*[2]

English language instructors have long used technology in their everyday teaching practices. While practitioners may have transitioned from writing notes on a blackboard to using an interactive whiteboard (e.g., SMART Board), or from using audio cassette tapes to using podcasts, keeping pace with the rapidly changing nature of technology can be challenging. Adding to this challenge, suggestions for selecting and using educational technologies are often not articulated or integrated within curricula. Rather, the implementation and use of technologies is left to the discretion of individual instructors. The aim of the following section is to provide an overview of the considerations for planning and including e-learning as an intentional element of English language curricula.[3]

ATESL Best Practices for Adult ESL/ LINC Programming in Alberta No. 41 (indicator 49)

Technology is used to encourage learners to explore and create language, as well as to use language to explore ideas, solve problems, develop new skills, and negotiate and communicate with an expanded audience.

What is e-learning?

E-learning describes the use of educational technologies that include, but are not limited to, the use of computers, the Internet, and videoconferencing.[4] In practice, e-learning allows learners flexibility in choosing the time and/or location for learning.[5] One or a combination of the following delivery modes may be used:

- Online learning (delivered via a course management system, e.g., Blackboard, Moodle)
- Blended learning (a combination of face-to-face and online instruction)
- Integration of educational technologies into the face-to-face classroom (e.g., videoconferencing, interactive whiteboards, digital voice recorders)

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1 Garrison and Anderson (2003) define educational technologies as: "those tools used in formal educational practice to disseminate, illustrate, communicate, or immerse learners and teachers in activities purposefully designed to induce learning" (p. 34).

2 Blake, 2007, p. 83.

3 For a companion guide that provides practical teaching and learning ideas and examples for integrating a wide variety of technology tools and resources into the ESL context, see *E-learning tools and resources in ESL: Putting principles into practice* (Chambers, 2011).

4 Light, 2011.

5 Light, 2011.

Many ESL programs in Alberta are able to provide learners with regular computer lab time, and instructors have likely used (or sampled) a range of web-based language learning tools and resources. Though many e-learning tools and resources available on the Internet are not designed specifically for English language learning, most have user-friendly formats and are customizable. When the appearance and content of the tools can be modified, e-learning tasks, materials, and assessment tools can be designed to address English language learning outcomes and support learners in a meaningful way.

Within some ESL contexts, access to computer-based technologies may be limited or non-existent. In these settings, e-learning technologies that do not rely on computers may be incorporated into face-to-face classrooms. These may include the use of videoconferencing, which is currently implemented within some rural Alberta ESL programs,[6] and interactive whiteboards (e.g., SMART Boards). Other e-learning technologies that lend themselves well to face-to-face contexts include digital voice and video recorders, smartphones, wikis, and more recently, tablet PCs (e.g., Apple's iPad & iPad2, Blackberry's PlayBook). See Table 1 for some of the many ways in which two of these learning technologies can be used in an ESL class.

Table 1. Using wikis and digital voice recorders.

Wikis are editable web-based pages that require a computer and an Internet connection.

- At the beginning of the course, instructors create a wiki for the class and a page for each of the learners, so learners can introduce themselves to their classmates and post personal work throughout the course.
- Learners are paired with long distance or foreign partners to exchange cultural information about the countries in which they live. Digital photos, videos, and audio files can be uploaded to the wiki to support written entries.
- Learners practice their writing and editing skills as they prepare a Wikipedia entry of their choice.

Digital voice recorders, either built into the computer or handheld devices (e.g., iPods), can be used to create podcasts that may be uploaded or embedded into, for example, PowerPoint presentations, weblogs, wikis, webpages, and course management systems.[7]

- Learners create an educational podcast (a digital audio recording) about a local place of interest (e.g., zoo, nature reserve, historical monument). This could involve researching the place or area, conducting interviews and surveys, writing a script, and recording their findings. The podcasts can be presented to the class and discussed. (Podcasts can be loaded onto a desktop PC. If Internet access is available, podcasts can be uploaded to iTunes where learners can access and listen to them at their convenience.)
- Small group conversations or discussions are captured for playback and review.
- Learners record themselves as they narrate a story or practice a presentation. The recording can be used for focused pronunciation practice.
- Curriculum developers and instructors create podcasts using a digital recorder, building a library of podcasts that can be used for developing listening strategies and skills, or to provide models for pronunciation practice.

[6] For example, the Bridges for Rural Immigrants project at Bow Valley College.

[7] Handheld digital voice recorders do not require a computer or an Internet connection unless podcasts are uploaded to an online repository or played on a computer.

Second language acquisition research suggests that whether language learning instruction is delivered in a face-to-face classroom or at a distance, learning outcomes and the processes of language learning remain the same.[8] E-learning technologies and practices can be incorporated into all elements of curriculum design. The benefits associated with an effective, intentional approach to implementing e-learning are explored next.

The benefits of e-learning

The following benefits associated with e-learning are informed by the literature,[9] grounded in the experiences of instructors in the field, and discussed at conferences for English language professionals.[10] Integrating e-learning within ESL curriculum allows for the following:

- **Accommodation of multiple forms of communication** (i.e., text, oral, and aural). Technology-based communication tools (e.g., blogs, wikis, podcasts) have potential to act as a "springboard for thinking deeply and engaging with content in the ways promoted in classroom instruction."[11]
- **Extended learning opportunities.** Learning extends beyond the brick and mortar classroom to communication with other language learners situated in different contexts or countries. Working collaboratively with culturally diverse learners draws attention to the perspectives, practices and products of different cultures.[12]
- **A flexible approach to instruction.** For example, readings, quizzes, practice activities, and sample exams can be available for learners online. Instructors can use technologies to effectively track grades, monitor learner progress, and provide timely feedback when learners' assignments and collaborative group work are available online (e.g., weblogs or wikis).
- **Extended access to a wide variety of online services.** These services can include language learning supports (e.g., electronic tutorials, social networks, online resources), as well as government, employment, and community agencies.

For more information on strategies to build ICC and foster culturally responsive teaching and learning environments, see *Section 7: Intercultural Communicative Competence.*

While e-learning is widely recognized for the benefits it brings to English language learners, its implementation and use has varied widely. E-learning is not a panacea for the challenges of language learning and instruction, even among the most technologically enamored, and its implementation can be challenging. A recent e-survey[13] of program coordinators, instructors, and volunteers of rural Alberta ESL and literacy providers revealed the following barriers to the use of technology:

- Limited or no access to computer labs (specifically for part-time and volunteer programs)
- No Internet access in the classroom
- A shortage of computers and other educational technologies (e.g., voice recorders, software)
- Instructors' and learners' lack of familiarity with technologies
- Learners' low literacy levels

[8] Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2008.
[9] For example, Blattner & Fiori, 2009; Egbert & Yang, 2004; Levy, 2009; Stockwell, 2007.
[10] For example, ATESL, TESL Canada, TESOL, CALICO, EUROCALL.
[11] Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2008, p. 286-287.
[12] Blake, 2007; Chapelle, 2007; Dooly, 2008.
[13] Foote & Light, 2010.

The benefits of e-learning mentioned earlier do not ensue automatically just because technology tools have been used.[14] Rather, learners benefit the most from e-learning when educational technologies are intentionally integrated and articulated into language curriculum in ways that support the program goals and learning outcomes.[15]

Key considerations for integrating e-learning into ESL curricula

A number of guiding principles and standards documents have been published addressing how e-learning technologies may best be used to design quality programs and promote effective practices. These include the *Canadian Recommended E-learning Guidelines,*[16] *TESOL Technology Standards Framework,*[17] and *Guiding Principles for Online ESL Programming.*[18] Each document concisely identifies and describes guiding principles for e-learning. In addition to these guidelines, Alberta educational contexts require adherence to the Copyright Act,[19] the Personal Information and Protection Act[20] (PIPA), and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act[21] (FOIP). It is important to be aware of the requirements of PIPA and FOIP to protect learners when they work in an online, sometimes open, environment.[22]

Table 2 builds from the guiding principles and standards documents and offers an overview of the key design considerations for integrating e-learning into English language curriculum.

Table 2. Key design considerations for integrating e-learning into a curriculum.

Program considerations	• Identify the e-learning competencies the curriculum will support and articulate these as outcome statements. • Ensure both learners and instructors have access to institutional supports including IT and library services and up-to-date educational technologies (e.g., computer lab, software, high speed Internet).[23] • State how PIPA and FOIP considerations will be communicated to instructors and learners to protect personal information in online environments. • Offer on-going sustainable e-learning professional development opportunities including training and mentorship in educational technologies.
Mindful e-learning	• Consider learners' openness, comfort, and experience using educational technologies (See "Digital literacy," below). • Recognize that learners' familiarity with one type of technology (e.g., voice chat) does not guarantee familiarity with educational technologies (e.g., webinars).

[14] Blake, 2007.
[15] Blake, 2007.
[16] Barker, 2002.
[17] TESOL, 2008.
[18] Light, 2011.
[19] See the Department of Justice Canada, http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html.
[20] See http://servicealberta.ca/pipa.
[21] See http://www.servicealberta.ca/foip.
[22] Though based on American privacy law, Diaz, Golas, and Gautsch (2010) offer a number of useful suggestions for protecting learners when they engage in online settings.
[23] Shimoni & Barrington, 2010.

Intercultural communicative competence

- Provide opportunities for learners to develop intercultural communicative competence and cross-cultural knowledge[24] through opportunities to interact with global participants (e.g., videoconferencing).

Determining needs

- Identify the digital literacy skills of learners through a survey, interview, or discussion group.
- Provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their digital literacy skills, for example, by searching for information on the Internet, sending an e-mail to the instructor, or setting up a Skype account.

Setting and assessing outcomes

- Clearly state the e-learning outcomes learners are expected to demonstrate and how these will be assessed.
- Include opportunities for learner self-reflection.[25]
- Give easy-to-understand instructions, well-defined expectations, and quality exemplars.
- Provide grading rubrics for contributions to discussions and collaborative e-learning efforts (e.g., group work on assignments and projects).
- Include opportunities for instructor and peer feedback.

Sequencing tasks

Build e-learning tasks that provide ideal conditions for second language acquisition by ensuring the following:

  - Vocabulary and grammar are presented in a way that is relevant and noticeable to the learner.
  - Learners engage in meaningful communicative practice.
  - Learners are supported as they notice and correct their errors.[26]

- Ensure content is clearly organized and easy to navigate, instructions are clear, and language is easy to understand.
- Include relevant, practical, accessible e-learning tasks throughout the curriculum.
- Consider the strengths and limitations of the technology tools being used.
- Incorporate opportunities for meaningful interaction and collaboration among and between the learners, the instructor, and others (e.g., distant conversation partners).

[24] Blake, 2007; Dooly, 2008; Garrison & Anderson, 2003.
[25] Palloff & Pratt, 2009.
[26] Chapelle,1998.

Selecting methods and materials	• Use technology tools in an intentional way that complements the course content and methodology choices. • Promote an active, engaged instructional approach that provides prompt feedback and clearly communicates expectations. • Introduce, develop and extend learners' e-learning skills in an intentional way to advance their skill set. • Provide ample time for learner exploration and discovery when using new technologies. • Encourage the use of technology as a social and academic learning medium.[27] • Incorporate e-learning tools and resources that are relevant, practical, and accessible to learners. • Emphasize collaboration and the co-construction of knowledge when e-learning tools and resources are used. • Communicate to learners that the technical challenges they experience are not a reflection of their linguistic skills.[28] • Be prepared to accommodate and adapt to the different digital literacy levels that emerge among learners.
Demonstrating accountability	• Ask learners to provide suggestions for improving the use of e-learning within the course as well as to comment on their experiences using online tools and resources. Incorporate learners' suggestions into the curriculum, as applicable.

Integrating e-learning into ESL curricula

E-learning is not always articulated within English language curriculum documents; its implementation is often left to the discretion of individual instructors. It may also be considered an 'add-on' to an already existing program or course, instead of an integrated dimension of the curriculum. Quality e-learning instructional design and practice relies on the same foundational curriculum design processes and instructional decisions as traditional face-to-face ESL programs. In the next sections, we highlight the principles for designing e-learning tasks and selecting effective assessment strategies for e-learning.

[27] Seeley-Brown, 2002.
[28] Hampel, 2006.

Designing e-learning tasks

It would be convenient and cost efficient to simply move tasks (and materials) that work well in face-to-face classrooms into an e-learning environment; however, new technology tools and resources tend to complement rather than replace existing practices. For example, e-mail has not replaced phone calls because each communication mode suits different functions or purposes.[29] While the guiding principles of task design for the face-to-face ESL classroom and for e-learning are generally shared, there are a number of considerations that are unique to e-learning tasks. The resources and tools available in e-learning often serve a purpose that cannot be duplicated in the traditional classroom; for example, wikis and blogs are well-suited to writing tasks that require collaboration among learners. Ideally, an e-learning task should be more than just an opportunity to use language; a good e-learning task should be one that promotes language learning. In order to maximize their language learning potential,[30] it is important that e-learning tasks do the following:

- Take into account the strengths and limitations of the technology tools being used. For example, engaging learners in online interaction within larger groups does not automatically result in the negotiation and practice that leads to language acquisition. Instead, smaller groups or pairs working within a course management system discussion[31] with clearly defined task goals and instructions will result in more collaboration and practice to better support language learning.
- Foster digital literacy by introducing technology in an intentional, gradual way (sequenced and spiraled) to build awareness and skills, teaching learners how to learn with technology.
- Consider the learners' language proficiency, their comfort and skills using technology (digital literacy), and their learning styles and intelligences when designing e-learning tasks.
- Support active learning outside the classroom by requiring learners to work together to complete a task. When working in groups to complete an assignment or project, online tools such as wikis or document-sharing sites support online collaboration and communication.
- Build in opportunities for feedback from the instructor and other learners. For example, learners' work can be posted on a secure online space (i.e., a wiki, blog, or website), so learners can leave comments and questions about the work of their peers.

For more information on active learning, multiple intelligences, and learning styles, see *Section 6: Mindful Learning*. For more information on task design, sequencing, and spiraling, see *Section 3: Sequencing Tasks*.

For curriculum designers and instructors alike, designing e-learning tasks requires a substantial time commitment, a comfort and willingness to experiment with educational technologies, and a commitment to actively engage learners in a purposeful way. (See *sample lesson plan in Figure 1*.) Regardless of whether the course takes place in an online, blended or classroom-only context, effective e-learning tasks focus on developing language skills, building knowledge, and fostering intercultural communicative competence. Curriculum design considers the integration and building of e-learning tasks in a scaffolded, sequenced way rather than as a one-off approach.

[29] Chapelle, 2001.
[30] Chapelle (2001) refers to language learning potential as "the extent to which an activity can be considered to promote language learning rather than simply serving an opportunity for language use" (p. 8).
[31] E.g., Blackboard, Moodle.

Below is a sample lesson plan designed for an intermediate level ESL face-to-face class with learners who have some experience and comfort working with technology. It incorporates e-learning tools and resources within a set of tasks.

Table 3. Sample lesson plan.

Ghosts of Banff Springs Hotel	**E-learning considerations**
Background: The Banff Springs Hotel is located in Banff, Alberta. This castle-like hotel was built in 1888 by the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is situated in the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Over the years, many ghostly encounters have been documented by patrons and staff of the hotel. The hotel is a busy tourist destination. In fact, the Banff Springs Hotel is so popular today visitors must make a reservation far in advance of their visit. They can expect to pay $250.00 and more per night. The popularity of the hotel may be due, in part, to the spine-chilling ghosts who are thought to live there.	• This lesson can be adapted to fit within your particular curriculum. • Develop learning outcomes that address your curriculum goals.
Learners will: • Use Google Maps to learn facts about the Banff area. • Write an advertisement for a travel destination of their choice. • View a YouTube video about the Banff Springs Hotel. • Use Google Docs to access and download a worksheet. • Use VoiceThread to express opinions in response to a question and respond to the postings of three peers.	• Ensure the objectives of the tasks address the specific learning outcomes identified in the curriculum. • Make learning objectives explicit so that learners know the criteria for successfully completing the learning tasks. • Consider learners' comfort and skills with e-learning tools when setting learning outcomes. Avoid overwhelming learners with unfamiliar online tools.

Task 1: Banff – A traveller's paradise

- Let's learn about Banff! Go to Google Maps (http://maps.google.ca) Enter *Banff, Alberta* into the search box.
  - On the menu on the left-hand side of the screen, click on the link *Explore this area.* Click on *Photos* to see pictures of places and animals found in Banff. Click on *Videos* to see short movies about Banff.
  - On the map, you can zoom in to have a closer look at specific places in Banff or you can zoom out to see where Banff is located within Alberta, Canada, and the world.
- Create an advertisement for a travel destination of your choice. Use a word processing program, your blog or wiki, or Glogster (edu.glogster.com) to develop your advertisement. Use royalty-free images. If you use a word processing program, upload the completed version to your Google Docs account and share it with all your classmates and your instructor. Share your online advertisements with your peers.

- Provide clear, concise directions and instructions for learners.
- Include web site addresses and a description of the features available when using the e-learning tool or resource. This is particularly important when learners are using the tool for the first time.
- Build in opportunities for learners to explore the tool's unique features. In this lesson, learners are encouraged to use the zoom feature of Google Maps to explore the Banff town site.
- Tell learners what is expected for successful completion of the learning task, including a description of the elements to be included. Consider using a rubric.

Task 2: Ghosts of the Banff Springs Hotel

- Watch the short video (http://tinyurl.com/4op4qxy) to see images of the Banff Springs Hotel.
- Read the story, "The Dancing Bride of the Banff Springs Hotel." It is available on your Google Docs account. Download the file to your computer. Complete the fill-in-the-blanks found at the end of the story. E-mail the file to your instructor.

- Include a variety of e-learning tools to address each language skill area. In this lesson, learners practice their listening comprehension and reading skills.

Task 3: Stating your opinion.

- Watch the video (http://youtu.be/u6trH81xpko) to see images of ghosts. (Warning: Some pictures may be frightening!)
- Go to VoiceThread (http://voicethread.com/share/593387) and record your answer to this question: *Do you think the pictures in the video are proof ghosts exist?* Be sure to listen to the recordings of your peers and respond to their comments. You must respond to three people.

- Use e-learning tools to support collaborative work.
- Build in opportunities for peer review and assessment. Provide learners with a rubric to review the work of their peers.

Effective assessment strategies for e-learning

> *Language testing that is driven by technology, rather than technology being employed in the service of language testing, is likely to lead us down a road best not traveled.*[32]

Standardized tests (e.g., TOEFL) often make use of technology-based tools because they tend to be efficient, valid, and cost-effective.[33] While these types of large-scale tests are generally used for placement purposes, we focus attention on assessment *of* and *for* learning within ESL programs. Accordingly, the principles for developing or selecting e-learning assessment strategies and tools emphasize what the learners are able to do and focus on aligning learning outcomes with the processes of teaching and learning. When e-learning tools and technologies are included as an integral part of ESL curricula, the forms of assessment thought to be most effective are

- Portfolio assessment.
- Authentic assessments that require learners attend to real-world issues (e.g., project-based learning).
- Performance-based assessments (e.g., wikis, blogs, multimedia presentations).[34]

These forms of assessment focus on the process of learning in authentic, real-world applications and incorporate the key e-learning principles and practices.

For more information on assessment in general, and portfolio assessment in particular, see *Section 2: Setting and Assessing Outcomes*. For more information on project-based learning, see *Section 3: Sequencing Tasks*.

Whether an ESL course is delivered entirely online, blended, or in a face-to-face classroom that occasionally uses educational technologies, effective assessment strategies reflect the active and collaborative nature of e-learning *(see Table 4)*.

[32] Douglas, 2000, p. 275.
[33] Douglas, 2000; Chapelle & Douglas, 2006.
[34] Palloff & Pratt, 2009.

Table 4. Effective e-learning assessment strategies and examples.

Effective e-learning assessment strategies…	Example
Give easy-to-understand instructions, well-defined expectations, and quality exemplars.	Create an electronic repository within the course management system, web page, or wiki that includes exemplars of learner work. Author permission is required before posting learners' work.
Provide grading rubrics for contributions to discussions and collaborative e-learning efforts (e.g., group work on assignments and projects).	A rubric for participation in a discussion may include the following criteria: • Responds to peers in a positive manner • Supports positions with real-world examples or experiences • Provides relevant feedback • Relates responses to the discussion topic A rubric for collaborative group work may ask learners to address questions, such as • Did I contribute an equal share to the group? • Did I make a significant contribution? • Did I provide relevant feedback to other group members?
Incorporate opportunities for learner self-reflection.[35]	Electronic portfolios (e-Portfolios or digital portfolios), like paper-based portfolios, include a self-reflective component. Provide learners with a rubric to guide their thoughts about each piece of work they have included within their e-portfolio. Weblogs (blogs) are another online tool that learners can use to maintain a self-reflective journal throughout the course.
Include opportunities for on-going instructor and peer feedback.	Feedback sessions can be conducted online via voice chat applications such as Skype or Google Talk, provided via e-mail, or recorded via VoiceThread or a podcast. Post learner work online in a secured, private location (e.g., Google Docs or a course management system) so learners can comment on one another's assignments.

[35] Palloff & Pratt, 2009.

When a course management system is used in online or blended courses, learners' online communications can be tracked using the tools available in the course management system. For instance, instructors can monitor learners' activities, including the number of responses they provide to others on the discussion board, how many posts they read, and what course content they view and download. Learners' contributions can be counted for participation marks and rated for quality.[36] Traditional forms of assessment, such as written assignments, quizzes, and practice exams may also be included within online and blended courses by using the tools available within the course management system.

Even if a course management system is not available, there is a wide variety of other technology-based tools and resources that can be used for assessment and feedback purposes. For example, digital voice recorders and digital cameras can be effectively used for self-assessment purposes as well as by the instructor to assess learners' language (e.g., fluency, pronunciation, word usage) and presentation skills. When written assignments are submitted electronically or uploaded to an online document sharing tool (e.g., Google Docs), feedback can be provided using comment boxes and tracking tools. Online quizzes, activities, and assignments can be regularly incorporated into lessons and included as formative assessment within a course. When assessment strategies use a technology-based tool, there are a number of questions to keep in mind:[37]

- Are learners familiar with the tool and do they understand how to access the feedback process? For example, are learners able to find the instructor's comments embedded within a text document and do they know how to interpret and use the tracking changes feature of the word processor?
- Does the technology tool offer an authentic communicative situation? For instance, when learners are viewing a video segment, is the dialogue authentic (or authentic-like), and does it portray a real-world conversation or situation?
- Are learners familiar with the delivery format of the technology tool? For instance, asking learners to complete an online timed reading comprehension activity requires familiarity with the tool as well as a degree of digital literacy. Learners need practice using the tool to gain familiarity and confidence with it before using it in an assessment or testing situation.
- Will the results gathered from the technology tool be valid measures of the learner's performance? Will the mode of delivery affect the outcome? Is the level of digital literacy assumed by the technology tool commensurate with the digital literacy of the learners?

When including e-learning tools and resources in ESL curricula, it is important to ensure that e-learning outcomes are aligned with assessment strategies and tools. Educational technologies often offer unique possibilities and options for the assessment *of* and *for* learning.

For more information on assessment *of* and *for* learning, see *Section 2: Setting and Assessing Outcomes.*

[36] Fenwick & Parsons, 2009.
[37] Douglas, 2000.

Principled e-learning and teaching practices

With the rapid growth of educational technologies and their integration throughout adult ESL programs, it is important to understand the attitudes, motivations, and skills that instructors and learners bring to the English language classroom.

Digital literacy

> *Digital literacy represents a person's ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment, with "digital" meaning information represented in numeric form and primarily for use by a computer. Literacy includes the ability to read and interpret media (text, sound, images), to reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and to evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from digital environments.*[38]

When English language programs incorporate educational technologies within their curriculum, learners' experience, skills and comfort with technology must be addressed. There will likely be diversity among learners' and instructors' skills and experiences working or learning with technology. Prensky (2001a, 2001b; 2003) differentiates between digital natives and digital immigrants. Digital immigrants are those who did not grow up in the digital era (i.e., born prior to 1980), while digital natives are those who have grown up using technologies such as the Internet, computers, and MP3 players. Digital natives may be technology-savvy, that is, they use technology to communicate (e.g., using social networking sites, mobile phones), complete assignments using a word processor, and surf the Internet.[39] However, they may lack familiarity with or experience using educational technologies. For example, they may not be familiar with creating presentations using PowerPoint, using online library resources, or using course management systems. In other words, their experience, skills, and comfort with digital media may be high, but their computer-wiseness[40] or their ability to use the computer in learning situations may be limited and require program and instructional supports (e.g. IT support and training; sequenced and spiraled task design).

Within ESL contexts, it is especially important to point out that digital literacy is not developmentally tied to lower or higher levels of English proficiency. Learners with advanced English proficiency skills may lack familiarity with or experience using educational technologies, just as beginning learners might. Also, familiarity with one type of technology does not guarantee familiarity with other technologies. For example, while professionally-educated ESL learners such as engineers may have advanced knowledge of and experience working with software applications in their field, their skill set may not extend to using educational technologies such as discussion boards within a course management system. When e-learning technologies are included in English language training, the instructor is responsible for introducing, developing, and extending learners' digital literacy skills in an intentional way. The successful integration of e-learning requires the instructor be prepared to accommodate and adapt to the different digital literacy levels that emerge among learners in their class.

[38] Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006, Defining digital and visual literacy, para. 1.
[39] Kvavik, 2005.
[40] Gerbault, 2007.

Instructor e-practices

> *Both the learner and the teacher are part of the larger process of learning. Teaching presence is charged with shaping the right transactional balance, and along with the learners, managing and monitoring the achievement of worthwhile learning outcomes in a timely manner.*[41]

Effective ESL instructors develop and maintain a strong teaching presence[42] whether the program or course is delivered in an online, blended or traditional face-to-face context. Because e-learning brings a new dimension to the teaching and learning process, it is important to be sensitive to the learners' experiences with and expectations of technology, and to make provisions for this in practice. The e-learning preferences and experiences of learners can provide valuable insights into how instructors might change the shape of their instructional approaches. For example, EAP learners may appreciate receiving course updates and announcements through social networking applications[43] (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).

Intentionally building, supporting, and assessing learners' digital literacy complements the development of language skills and knowledge. Effective instructor e-practices include the following:

- Encouraging the use of technology as a social and academic learning medium.[44]
- Using e-learning tools and resources that are relevant, practical, and accessible to learners.
- Using technology tools appropriately and effectively to achieve learning objectives and outcomes.
- Planning and organizing a course (i.e., online, blended, or face-to-face) and its content so it is easily navigable and uses clear instructions and plain language.[45]
- Promoting an active, engaged approach that provides prompt feedback and clearly communicates expectations.
- Communicating to learners that technical challenges they experience are not a reflection of their linguistic skills.[46]

When e-learning is integrated into language curriculum, the role of the instructor is one of a content-area and language specialist as well as a co-learner and collaborator. Within the e-learning context, instructors and their learners may not have the same level of comfort and skill with technology. In fact, at times learners may have more confidence and skill with e-learning tools than their instructors. This is an opportunity for instructors to allow learners to take the lead and demonstrate their digital literacy, while still guiding the learning process to satisfy curriculum goals and learning outcomes. However, it is important that curriculum developers and programs provide support in the curriculum and in professional development opportunities, so that instructors are able to make full and principled use of the technology available.

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[41] Garrison & Anderson, 2003, p. 65.
[42] Garrison & Anderson (2003) refer to teaching presence as the "selection, organization, and primary presentation of course content as well as the design and development of learning activities and assessment" (p. 90).
[43] Caution is advised when using social networking tools in the ESL classroom. Instructors may want to set up an account for personal use and one for professional use. Set boundaries with your learners. Be sure to manage and customize your privacy settings for both accounts. Encourage learners to do the same. Learners also need to be vigilant about protecting their personal information on the Internet.
[44] Seeley Brown, 2002.
[45] Shimoni & Barrington, 2010.
[46] Hampel, 2006.

Conclusion

> *Technology does and will continue to serve us as a fantastically useful, creative tool. If we first set moderate expectations of ourselves, others, and our institutions, then this working paradigm will slowly infiltrate everything we do and will support different learning styles and needs in ways traditional teaching has not been equipped to do ever before.*[47]

As curriculum developers and instructors recognize the benefits that educational technologies bring to English language programs, the use of e-learning will continue to gain momentum. Whether delivery is offered online, blended or face-to-face, e-learning should support and enhance learning opportunities for learners in ways that extend traditional teaching practices. E-learning technologies lend themselves well to active, collaborative, and interactive task design and instructional practices that maximize language learning opportunities for learners. In this section of the *ATESL Curriculum Framework,* we have highlighted a number of key considerations for integrating e-learning into English language instruction. When educational technologies are integrated into ESL curricula, the digital literacy of learners must be taken into consideration. Instructor practices will focus on building confidence among learners and promoting an active, engaging approach with clear expectations. To support e-learning as a vital element of English language programs, institutional supports, such as IT services and on-going sustainable e-learning professional development opportunities, are imperative for the success of e-learning curriculum initiatives. The integration of e-learning into curriculum requires deliberate attention to aligning outcomes, tasks, materials, methods, and assessment strategies.

[47] Saury, 1996, p. 32.

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