

Final Report

Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through The Use of Technology Grant

Project: Creating Live E-Learning Environments: Exploring Horizon Wimba *Live Classroom* in WebCT

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The goal of the proposed project has been for Applied Linguistics faculty to explore, learn, and integrate Horizon Wimba *Live Classroom* to fill the gap of real communication in their online courses. Horizon Wimba *Live Classroom* is promising software and its functionality picks up where WebCT leaves off. By retaining many of the same elements of a face-to-face classroom, *Live Classroom* allows faculty and students to build relationships by combining state-of-the-art interactive technologies such as voice, video, application sharing, polling, and whiteboarding, with traditional best practices of instruction.

We have met the long-term goal of integrating successfully Horizon Wimba *Live Classroom* with all Applied Linguistics online courses. Below is a chart of all courses offered online where Horizon Wimba is currently used:

<u>Online Courses</u>
Apling 601 Linguistics
Apling 603 Cross Cultural Perspectives
Apling 605 Teaching ESL Theories and Principles
Apling 614 Foundations of Bil. Education
Apling 618 ESL Methods and Approaches
Apling 611 Methods & Materials in Foreign Language
Apling 612 Integrating Culture in the FL Classroom
Apling 621 Psycholinguistics
Apling 625 Second Language Acquisition
Apling 670 Testing in the Bil/ESL Classroom
Apling 673 Reading in the Bil/ESL Classroom
Apling698 Practicum

Below, I present in more detail the process of integrating Wimba:

Fall 2006 Semester

Fall 2006 was the launching semester for the MA in Applied Linguistics Online. I taught one course online (APLING614 Foundations of Bilingual/Multicultural Education) in which I integrated Horizon Wimba Live Classroom. With the help of our IT department, and especially Alan Girelli, I was able to run three live sessions of Wimba. The first one was experimental and the other two linked directly with the course content. One particular difficulty for setting up more live sessions was the difference in time zones. In our online program we have students from North and South America, Europe, and East Asia and therefore, it was particularly challenging to try to find a time that would work

for all 15 students in my class. I have allowed my colleagues from Applied Linguistics to audit my course so they can monitor the ways I have used Live Classroom this past semester. I have noticed that it is important the first few times to run Live Classroom with the help of an IT staff so they can address all the technical problems while the instructor is working on course content.

This past semester, I was able to experiment with Live Classroom, learn the software and explore its multiple features. On 12/14/06, we set up an all-day training for Applied Linguistics faculty with six faculty members attending. The schedule of the training was as follows:

10-Noon overview

Noon -1:30 Breeze full training

2-4PM Wimba training

The goal of the workshop was to familiarize our faculty with the software and demonstrate different uses of Live Classroom so they can use it when they teach online.

Finally, during the Fall 2006 semester I was part of a CIT (Center for the Improvement of Teaching) panel on online teaching where I discussed the integration of Live Classroom in online courses.

Spring 2007 Semester

During Spring 2007, I have requested and was granted a course load reduction (the grant money covered this cost). I have committed 50% of my time to exploring Live Classroom further, expanding training options and assisting faculty with their online courses individually. I have been working individually with three faculty members teaching in the Spring to assist them with integrating Horizon Wimba in their Classrooms. Furthermore, I have successfully used Wimba Live Classroom to train our online adjunct faculty who are not located in Massachusetts (Portland OR, Las Cruces, NM, University Park, PA, Turkey). I have also been working on establishing student groups based on time zones for each cohort so we can better coordinate live sessions and achieve greater attendance.

In the Spring of 2007, we offered four online courses towards the MA in Applied Linguistics Online. I worked closely with two out of the four online instructors to set up Wimba sessions for their courses and facilitate the process. I have also participated in all the Wimba sessions set up during the Spring '07 for all online courses offered. As I have observed before, the challenge has been to coordinate a group of people that live in different time zones. This observation led us to divide our two new Fall '07 cohorts based on their time zones, in order to make Live Classroom sessions easier to set up. During the semester I continued my research on the applications of Live Classroom in graduate courses and especially those dealing with teacher training for foreign/second language instruction. Through the CALICO (Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium) Listserv I have dialogued with colleagues about multiple uses of live classroom in graduate courses such as:

- How can we incorporate voice tools such as iPods, Podcasting, and Wimba Voice tools to WebCT.
- How can we make the best use of Live Classroom without compromising the asynchronous character of online courses and the flexibility they offer to students
- What is the best way to structure Live Classroom sessions when there is limited time and a lot of content to be discussed
- How do we manage student participation

Fall 2007

Since our online program has grown already since the first year, in the Fall of '07 we have accepted two cohorts of 20 students compared with only one cohort of 20 students last year. This growth has created the need to hire more adjunct professors who will need to be trained in WebCt and Horizon Wimba. In the Fall of 2007 I worked individually with the four new hires (online faculty) in training them to use Live Classroom. What's most important is that we have been using Live Classroom to communicate and set up meetings. I will also be working with two of our own full time faculty who will be teaching courses in the Spring of '08. In addition, our faculty uses Wimba to hold office hours for online students.

Other Applications: Faculty Meetings and Comprehensive Exam Preparation Sessions

Wimba Live Classroom has proven to be a valuable tool for conducting online meetings with our adjunct faculty who are not located in Massachusetts. We have used Wimba as a forum for discussions and exchange of ideas.

We have been able to conduct very successful preparation sessions using Wimba, for our capstone project, that is a comprehensive exam. These sessions have had very high participation and we have been able to archive sessions that have been accessible to students later.

In summary, Wimba Live Classroom has proven to fill the gap of real communication in our online courses. Through the use of this tool we have been able to:

- **Create a sense of community** among students and professors who might not otherwise interact with one another
- **Offer live classes, office hours, and group discussions** at times that are convenient for professors and students, not just when the physical facilities are available
- **Facilitate administrative processes** by using Wimba for faculty meetings and other communications
- **Ensure students understand the material** by asking for immediate feedback, answering questions, and giving in-depth verbal explanations of complex material