

Title: **Real Engagement, Real Enrichment, Real Experience:
Technology-facilitated Authentic Groupwork Projects**

Presenter: **Gary C. Wood, Sarah Horrigan**
University of Sheffield & University of Derby

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will have:

- considered and discussed the value of authentic assessment projects in enhancing students' learning of subject knowledge and transferrable key skills;
- seen how Google Apps can facilitate groupwork projects, scaffolding learning and eliminating students' negative evaluation of working collaboratively;
- thought in-depth about the application of authentic assessment, and building websites in particular, to their own practice;
- a toolkit for the development of website-based TEL projects and an understanding of how to implement such projects using Google Apps.

Session Outline

Showcasing Google award-winning AllAboutLinguistics.com - created as an assessment by our first-year undergraduate students - this session will demonstrate how technology can facilitate real-world projects that engage students by providing an authentic learning experiences. The technology facilitates engagement with groupwork, providing tools and support to minimise the problems of working face-to-face that often lead to negative evaluation of collaborative projects.

Building AllAboutLinguistics.com engaged current and prospective students, with first-years supporting A-Level students' transition into HE by highlighting the diverse range of opportunities offered by degree-level linguistics. Students were challenged by real stakeholders, real deadlines and real-world project management, gaining confidence in their academic knowledge by showcasing it internally and externally. We show how authentic learning experiences lead to an enjoyment of process with an underlying focus on quality output, whilst removing the grade fixation that often accompanies summative assessment. Additionally, students' engagement with formative feedback was enhanced, because tutors had continuous sight of their online work in development, allowing timely, specific feedback to be provided on an ongoing basis.

Since the technology supported students' groupwork, increasing their perceived control and competence for the task and so giving rise to high levels of intrinsic motivation (Fazey &

Fazey et al, 2001), students themselves noted they put in more work but got out far more than from traditional assessments. Further, we show how authentic assessment enhanced employability; with students recognising and articulating that they gained tangible, transferable skills through the learning process. Additionally, it fed into colleagues' digital practice, by reducing the need for scaffolding those students' skills and modelling practices - an effective means of developing digital practitioners (Bennett, 2012).

This is an interactive, hands-on session which does not assume any prior experience of using Google Sites. It shares the experiences of the lead academic and students' voices, taking participants through a structured approach to implementing online collaborative activities into practice.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Introduction - what are we going to cover and where does the AllAboutLinguistics.com case study fit in?

(15 mins)

(SH to introduce session, GW to provide overview)

AllAboutLinguistics.com case study introduction (10 mins)

Students talk about their experience of the project (5 mins)

Ice breaker

(10 mins)

(SH and GW to facilitate)

Ice breaker - find someone who isn't at your institution and form a pair. Introduce yourself to your partner and find out where they work, what their job role is and write on a post-it note a couple of key skills they've got in designing learning activities.

Stick post-it notes on wall (facilitators to refer to group's skills during session)

Resources: Post-it notes and pens

Initial learning activity design - How to start using Google Sites in your own practice?

(20 mins)

(SH to introduce activity (5 mins), both to facilitate)

In pairs: Participants to think about how they might use Google Sites in their own practice, writing their idea(s) on the initial ideas template. (10 mins)

Questions for consideration:

- How might you use Google Sites?
- Who would your audience be?

After ten minutes, form a group with another pair, and discuss your ideas. Choose one idea to build on further during the rest of the session. Participants might also like to share with their group some of the skills in activity design they identified as part of the ice breaker and which they could bring to the exercise (5 mins)

Resources: Initial ideas template, pens

Hands-on activity - collaboratively producing a 'Google Sites for learning and teaching resource' (35 mins)

(same small groups as at end of previous activity)

(GW to introduce

SH to demonstrate how to edit a page on Google Sites (5 mins))

"Using the iPads provided, start to put your group's ideas onto the Google Site we've created for the session."*

Each page is structured using the e-tivities model (Salmon, 2002) with participants recording the spark for the activity (taken from the 'initial ideas' activity), the purpose, the task as well as some additional considerations such as whether the project will be assess, whether it's going to be made openly available / have access restricted, how students will be briefed on copyright etc.

If groups have time available, they are welcome to extend their section of the site by adding further pages/interactivity. (20 mins)

After 20 minutes, each group to share with the room their brief explanation of how they might use Google Sites (10 mins)

Plenary and any questions - 'What we did next. What might you do next?' (10 mins)

SH and GW to discuss where they've taken this next and facilitate whole group discussion (whole group discussion / opportunity for questions)

What do you think the benefits of this approach might be for your learners? How confident do you feel to get started? What issues might apply and how might you address them?

Evaluation: Included on the Google Site will be a Google Form through which we will gather feedback on the session.

*We will supply a number of iPads for use by participants, but they can use their own devices if desired.

References

Bennett, E. (2012) *Learning from the early adopters: Web 2.0 tools, pedagogic practices and the development of the digital practitioner*. Doctoral thesis: University of Huddersfield. Available from: <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/15997> (Accessed: 18 September 2013)

Fazey, D.M.A. & Fazey, K.A. (2001) The Potential for Autonomy in Learning: Perceptions of competence, motivation and locus of control in first-year undergraduate students. *Studies in Higher Education*. 26(3). 345-361.

Salmon, G. (2002), *E-tivities: the key to active online learning*. London: Kogan Page