Wikis and the Practice of Reflection

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Stud ents cannot learn what either teachers or technologies know. Rather, students learn from thinking – thinking about what they are doing or what they did, thinking about what they believe, thinking about what others have done and believe, thinking about the thinking processes they use – just thinking. Thinking mediates learning. Learning results from thinking.

David H. Jonassen et al.

Introduction
Over the course of three quarters – Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Winter 2009 – we explored and evaluated the wiki environment as a forum for developing the practice of reflection among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. As instructors in low- to intermediate-level courses taught at The English Language Center (TELC), the noncredit ESL program of the Division of Adult and Continuing Education at LaGuardia Community College, our exploration has focused on two questions: First, in what ways can a wiki, defined as “a Web site that allows users to add and update content” (“Wiki”) be an effective environment for promoting meaningful learning for ESL students? Second, what types of wiki activities engage students in meaningful learning through the practice of reflection?

While the concept of meaningful learning has been defined in various ways by educators and researchers, Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson provide an extensive explanation (7–11). They suggest that meaningful learning occurs when students engage in learning that is simultaneously active, constructive, collaborative, authentic, and intentional. Our research is guided by their view that meaningful learning with technology is a constructive process, one in which students use “technology as a tool to think and learn with” (15), as opposed to more traditional views that consider technology to be a tool to be learned from. Grabe and Grabe, substituting the term “cooperative” for “collaborative,” summarize the key elements of meaningful learning as follows:

• Active – learning occurs through interactions with and manipulations of the environment.
• **Constructive** – learning occurs when we reflect on our learning activities in order to assign meaning to them.

• **Intentional** – learning occurs when students can identify the learning goals and are aware of their progress toward actively achieving the goals.

• **Authentic** – learning occurs when context-based, complex, and relative to real life.

• **Cooperative** – learning occurs through working with others and participating in a learning community (qtd. in “Instructional”)

We recognize that the development of student reflection is an essential component of meaningful learning in general and of our own teaching approach in particular. Our exploration of the practice of reflection in wikis has centered on the collaborative, constructive, and intentional attributes of meaningful learning, of which the latter two are most relevant to reflection. (The active and authentic aspects of meaningful learning, already fundamental elements of our teaching, were not explored in our wiki experiments.) Although there was inevitably some overlap, we attempted to focus on a single attribute of meaningful learning – collaborative, constructive, or intentional – as the primary teaching objective in each of the three consecutive wikis.

**Collaborative, Constructivist, and Intentional Learning: An Overview**

Collaboration is a pedagogical tool treasured by many teachers who consider student interaction in a shared, project-based, or problem-solving activity to be key to meaningful, engaged learning. MacGregor emphasizes the value of collaborative learning:

> Through learning collaboratively, students can also learn the art and skill of building relationships with others. They can recognize the value as well as the challenges of mutual inquiry and problem-solving. Moreover, they can come to new understandings of themselves as responsible creators of their own knowledge and meanings – an essential skill for life-long learning. ([vii])

In our experience with wikis, we found that the collaborative nature of the wiki provided built-in opportunities for students to reflect and comment on one another’s work as well as on their own. Specifically,
wiki tools such as the discussion forums and the threads on every page facilitated peer feedback and student exchange of ideas.

The constructive attribute of meaningful learning is facilitated by encouraging students to reflect on what they have learned and to construct “simple mental models to explain their worlds” (Jonassen et al. 7). For language learners, such mental models relate to the theories they develop to make sense of structures or features of the target language, aspects of the culture represented by that language, and the perspectives of fellow students. When students are confronted with something new in the learning process, then by “reflecting on the puzzling experience, [they] integrate their new experiences with their prior knowledge about the world, or they establish goals for what they need to learn in order to make sense out of what they observe” (Jonassen et al. 7). For example, reflection can be observed in students when, actively engaged with source material or with another student’s work, they pose questions about what puzzles or interests them. Evaluating and commenting on a different or opposing opinion can lead to the construction of new perspectives, an essential aspect of reflective learning that formed the basis of specific activities in our second wiki.

As discussed, constructive learning emphasizes combining prior knowledge with new information in order to construct new knowledge or perspectives. Intentional learning, the focus of our third wiki, calls for the purposeful recognition and articulation of learning goals, as well as the evaluation of learning strategies designed to achieve specific goals. In this sense, intentional learning underscores Schank’s observation that human behavior is ultimately goal-directed (3). As teachers guide students to recognize and reflect on their own learning goals and progress, students can begin to “articulate what they have learned and reflect on the processes and decisions that were entailed in the process: they understand more and are better able to use the knowledge that they have constructed in new situations” (Jonassen et al. 8). Current approaches to teaching and teacher education in the field of language pedagogy demonstrate an interest in student awareness of learning styles, strategies, and self-assessment. Research by cognitive psychologists Garnham and Oakhill stresses the long-term value of encouraging the development of the metacognitive skills inherent in constructive and intentional learning. Although much of the research on teaching students how to think suggests that “it is difficult to teach global skills that improve general thinking ability,” Garnham and Oakhill maintain that “the training of metacognitive skills – the ability to reflect on, and
monitor, one’s own cognitive processes – is a good candidate for a programme that could improve thinking of all kinds” (287). As language teachers, our role is to provide information about English and opportunities to practice it. But we must also prepare students for a future in which they will need to be not only technologically adept, but also capable of constructing meaning and reflecting upon it, effectively and authentically. In our classes, wikis promised a technology platform to help us achieve these goals.

Why Wikis?
As ESL teachers, we had, for many semesters, designed ePortfolio activities around the practice of reflection. Although the teaching and learning results were generally positive, we observed that these reflection activities remained primarily individual – as opposed to collaborative – learning experiences.

During a spring 2008 International TESOL Convention presentation on the use of wikis in ESL classes, we were intrigued by the potential of wikis as ready-made opportunities for the creation of a community of collaborative learners who could share ideas and perspectives. By their very nature, wikis encourage interaction. For example, wiki pages are designed to offer users the option to share comments on content published in that particular wiki, or to start new threads. The advantages for teaching and learning are abundant: Students can easily post their own reflections in response to an article or to an audio clip; they can create links that allow the teacher or other students to access other materials easily; and they can enjoy creating profiles of themselves, asking questions of each other, and sharing interests by posting new threads. By promoting active, authentic, collaborative, constructive, and intentional learning, wikis allowed us more quickly to deepen the practice of reflection in our classes. Indeed, “the term ‘wiki’ comes from the Hawaiian phrase ‘wiki wiki,’ or ‘super fast’” (“Wiki”); in our classes, students engaged with wikis with impressive speed and ease, freeing them to focus on the assignment and classroom interaction in a simple and direct way without technology interfering.

Wiki One
Primary Focus: Collaborative Learning

In collaborative learning situations ... students are not simply taking in new information or ideas. They are creating some-
thing new with the information and ideas. These acts of intellectual processing – of constructing meaning or creating something new – are crucial to learning. (Smith and MacGregor [1])

Structured around the common theme of “The Environment,” our first wiki project focused on fostering collaboration within and between our low-intermediate and high-intermediate classes, both of which included reading and listening/speaking components. The reading components of each class emphasized research and critical thinking skills and the application of these skills to the selection of materials for class presentations. In addition to oral presentations, the listening and speaking segments stressed discussion of wiki threads and postings. Finally, students from both classes joined together in theme-related field trips.

Wiki One: The Process
Jumping into the world of wikis was an adventure that involved a measure of risk. In our previous work with ePortfolios, the LaGuardia Center for Teaching and Learning had provided us excellent technical training and support, as well as many ePortfolio models for students to explore through its online ePortfolio galleries (“Basic”). Yet one of the many advantages that we discovered in working with the user-friendly wiki provider, Wetpaint.com, was the very lack of any need for extensive technical support. In fact, our students were able to achieve basic wiki proficiency by the first or second class, quickly discovering how best to present their work. Because the students were collaborating on group presentations, those who were more comfortable with technology helped teach their partners how to use some of the wiki functions.

Students visited their wiki page to use a variety of tools including threads, discussion forums, and EasyEdit (the latter for the construction of individual and group pages), and to reflect on and discuss major environmental issues and their own impact on the environment. Specific community-building wiki activities included the following:

- The use of the wiki discussion area (called “Discussion Forum”) as a collaborative space for responding to prompts from teachers and peers and for presenting questions to the learning community for reflective comment. Students answered broad questions about environmental protection and questions about personal goals to protect the environment. Students also asked each other for content, clarification, and additional information.
• Teamwork to research and present information on specific environmental organizations in the New York area after an Earth Day field trip.

• Small group collaboration on researching topics and posting information to a wiki page. After an in-class group discussion of what each student would post, students worked independently from home to add to the wiki group page.

• The requirement to visit each other’s profiles and make comments about similar interests.

• A trip to Central Park with an Urban Park Ranger that offered students who had only seen each other’s names on the wiki page the chance to meet in person.

We also experimented with a few assignments unrelated to the environment theme. For example, we tried having students find a favorite song on YouTube (easily uploaded through Wetpaint.com), locate and post the lyrics on the wiki, and write a reflective comment about the significance of the song in a thread. After individual students shared information about their songs in class, their peers could go back, listen again, and comment. Not surprisingly, students were receptive to the use of music and lyrics as learning tools. Their enjoyment became clear from the high number of peer responses generated during the activity and from the positive feedback from students regarding this assignment at the end of the course.

Wiki One: Student Feedback
Out of thirty-six student responses to very general prompts, we were able to distinguish three main positive response types as well as some specific concerns. The prompts were:

• What did you like best about using a wiki to study English?
• What did you like least?
• What suggestions do you have for improving how we use the wiki?

What Students Liked Best:
One type of positive response focused on the value of wikis as a new style of teaching and learning. Among our ESL students’ comments were the following:

• “I think the best thing is that it made us think of environment and attempt to make new class style.”
• “I have never seen like this method class before. This is the new style education or communication. We already have sites like this that are Hi5, MySpace, Facebook, etc. We can communicate or talk easily more than in class. It means if we do this style class, students can talk about their opinion exactly or clearly, I guess. It does clearly make enjoyment for presentation in class. It’s good to learn and understand from other students’ opinions.”

• “I like this style. People can have fun or enjoy and discuss about pollution on wiki. It looks like other famous community sites as Hi5, Facebook, and MySpace. I want to have sites like this for any categories like politics or economy ...”

A second type of positive response highlighted the convenience of the wiki in allowing students to work at home or to use the wiki for group work:

• “If we need more time we can study in the house because Internet can be used anywhere and students can see other students’ messages also pictures. Then we don’t need to work together in the group because we can contact in wiki. Our time can save!!!! Wiki is easy and convenient for our class.”

• “I think that wiki is practical and helpful for our class. Also, it made it easier to do presentations and assignments. I like to use wiki ... I don’t have any suggestion for it. However, I want many people to use this program.”

• “Sometimes I feel it is very convenient because we can do homework at home. This is the top reason why I like wiki.”

A third area of positive responses focused on the wiki as a valuable forum for sharing ideas and opinions:

• “I think wiki was very good for me because it helped me to practice my writing. This is also a very good connection when I collaborate among classes.”

• “I think wiki is very good for ESL students because we can talk about other students’ opinions and figure that out. Also, I can show my opinion to other students. So we share our own ideas, and then that will help to increase our English skill.”

• “It’s good because we can share everyone’s information on this platform.”

• “I think that website is very important and helpful for us. We can find out about our friends’ opinions on many subjects.”
What Students Liked Least, and Their Suggestions for Improvement

Students’ suggestions for improvement included increasing the number of conversation opportunities, soliciting more student input into the selection of the theme, and varying the visual interest of the wiki. Of the two students concerned about not engaging in enough conversation, one wrote:

- “WIKI is a useful tool for finding some information, but I think it’s not very helpful learning English (maybe except reading skill?) because I couldn’t communicate with others at once. However, the amount of information in WIKI is amazing.”

In ESL classes that adopt a sustained-content approach, instructors frequently face the problem of finding thematic material of interest to all students. Our choice of the environment as a common theme opened us to the following criticism:

- “Above all, we should have decided to choose topic that everybody is interested. Also, we can ask everybody for their own topic. I think it is going to encourage students to participate in the class.”

Another student expressed appreciation for the theme and for the overall experience, but felt that the wiki could have provided more extensive resources or links:

- “I think this is really good for student. The wiki has a lot of things and serve diverse information. Also during progress this project, we learned how to coordinate with each other and experienced importance of environment through this project. But what the wiki need is to connect other website as linking.”

Comments on technical aspects of the wiki experience suggested changing the color of the wiki and adding news updates, music, photos, or chat spaces as ways to make the wiki more appealing. In addition, two students who offered generally positive comments about the overall experience also admitted to being challenged by the technology:

- “I’ve never used this website (wiki) before. Also I’m not good-at-PC person. Therefore, it’s hard for me to know how to use this site. However I like the wiki to share with other classmates too, so I think that wiki systems are really good for study.”

The tone and specificity of the student feedback to our first wiki experiment helped to ease some of our initial anxieties about using wikis in
the classroom. For example, technology did not prove to be an insurmountable problem as even those students with weaker technology skills enjoyed a positive learning experience. But the feedback also pointed to concerns regarding student input and independence. As we gathered the feedback and reflected on our first wiki semester, we thought about what we might do differently in the future.

Wiki One: Teacher Reflections
Guided by student response, we decided that our second wiki experiment would be more visually stimulating, more open to student design and creativity, and less focused on a single preselected major theme. Instead, we resolved to provide opportunities for students to choose their own topics, around which they would create individual Web pages and, with appropriate teacher support, develop individual, pair, or small-group research projects. A second concern suggested by student feedback, and an ongoing question for the ESL classroom, is how best to use wikis to teach and learn listening and speaking skills. In response to the desire for more speaking opportunities, we continued – and continue – to explore ways in which pairs and small groups can be used in a wiki setting to promote both listening and speaking, including the possibilities of uploading student-created YouTube videos or podcasts.

Most important to our primary goal of fostering shared learning in the ESL classroom, we learned that designing activities for student teamwork on group projects had many advantages. Students helped one another with the technology, made direct contact while working together in the lab, and cooperated on the creation of the wiki. The common theme and the single wiki shared by two classes had advantages as well, providing us with a natural basis for combining two classes for field trips and other events, and broadening our wiki community.

But most consequential to our experiments with wikis as an innovative way to foster reflection was the recognition that our students seemed to find the very concept of reflection challenging. In the first semester, this difficulty led to the showcasing of student work as presentation rather than reflection. It also led to our decision to focus more directly on reflection in the following semester. In our next wiki, the area we designated for exploration of teaching and learning was student reflection in response to images.
Wiki Two
Primary Focus: Constructive Learning

Students are not blank slates upon which knowledge is etched. They come to learning situations with already formulated knowledge, ideas, and understandings. This previous knowledge is the raw material for the new knowledge they will create. (Brooks et al.)

With the goal of developing habits of constructive reflection in response to specific images, we encouraged our students to relate their prior knowledge to images and through this reflective process, to construct their own understanding and meaning. As teachers, we were eager to observe how the use of wiki postings would support the sharing of such reflections.

Wiki Two: The Process
Fundamental to constructive learning is the role of scaffolding, especially for ESL learners. Summarizing one of its major advantages, Murphy writes, “Scaffolding allows students to perform tasks that would normally be slightly beyond their ability without that assistance and guidance from the teacher. Appropriate teacher support can allow students to function at the cutting edge of their individual development.”

To tap the benefits of scaffolding, we presented students with a photograph in the wiki every week of the semester and asked them to offer reflective comments by adding threads at the bottom of the wiki page. Some of the wiki images reflected aspects of American culture such as a family Thanksgiving dinner; others were images that might provoke varied responses, such as a scene featuring a homeless person.

In most cases, our prompts guided students to relate the image, or the feelings evoked by the image, to their previous experiences. Introducing our classes to the concept of constructing meaning through reflection, we pointed to each wiki comment on specific images and each response to one another’s threads as examples of the practice of reflection. However, as we read our students’ initial attempts at reflection, we realized that the students needed even more scaffolding to grasp the process of constructive reflection. We found that we needed to provide more models to help them express connections between an image and their own experience. Using our own responses to the images as examples, we began to model reflective expression, which
also helped to guide students toward written language appropriate for this type of reflection.

Our collaborative event for the semester was a trip to the International Center of Photography (ICP). This field trip served as further training for students in the development of their approaches to reflecting on images. Our ICP guide focused on tools that could be used for critical thinking and reflection, including question banks and charts that served as models for inquiry learning and suggestions for teaching about the exhibits. We incorporated these tools into the scaffolding questions that we later used to elicit reflective responses within our wiki.

Wiki Two: Student Feedback
At the end of our second semester of teaching with a wiki, we received thirty-one student responses to the following prompts:

- What do you see as the benefits of using wikis to develop language skills and reflective practice?
- Do you see any disadvantages?

As in the first wiki, many students responded by mentioning the value of exchanging and reflecting on one another’s opinions. Typical comments included the following:

- “I think wiki for reflective practice is very crucial for ESL students because it gives students the opportunities to practice English in writing, reading, etc. – helping students to share their ideas together, and also speaking practice.”
- “When I use the wikis, I can read classmates’ opinions and reply. We can help together.”
- “In my opinion, wikis are very helpful for students who learn English. We learn how to fast write in English, we post our opinion about photos and we can read each other opinions. I like wikis.”
- “I like wikis because I can read classmates’ opinion and can share information or opinion each other. It can help you to improve English skill. It’s good !!!!”
- “Other members can comment on your own thread, as a result you can read back their reply and when you read them you will notice if your idea or opinion is valuable or not.”
- “It is good to know what other people think. It is very interesting to know many different opinions. It is good that it encourages me to study more English.”
One student emphasized the value of wikis for developing a community of learners:

- “I think that wiki is a very good tool to create connections between students, to share information and encourage group’s work. Sometimes, it’s hard to find the time to meet students, so with wiki, it’s easy to work in distance.”

The disadvantages of using a wiki, mentioned by four students, included insufficient correction of grammar by the instructor and, as in the case of the first wiki, insufficient speaking practice. One student expressed the opinion that wikis were better for developing writing and vocabulary skills than speaking skills.

**Wiki Two: Teacher Reflections**

The students began to connect with the concept of reflection in this iteration of the wiki, but the dynamics of the class were different. Because of our greater emphasis on constructive over collaborative learning, the students worked individually more often, reacting to one another’s ideas through the technology and not face to face. Although activities in our previous wiki had stimulated student interaction, opportunities for oral communication were less frequent in the second wiki than in the first since we did not focus as extensively on group projects. Wiki Two was successful in helping the students to develop their process of reflection in response to images and the work of classmates. However, we missed the stronger sense of group collaboration we had created in Wiki One, and, as a consequence, we continued – and continue – to explore methods that combine the respective strengths of Wiki One and Wiki Two.

**Wiki Three**

*Primary Focus: Intentional Learning*

When learners articulate what they have learned and reflect on the processes and decisions that were entailed by the process, they understand more and are better able to use the knowledge that they have constructed in new situations. (Jonassen et al. 8)

Three types of activities in our third wiki promoted intentional or goal-directed reflection: peer feedback, student course feedback, and student self-assessment. These activities encouraged students to review
and evaluate their own learning strategies and provided us with insight into their progress.

**Wiki Three: The Process**

In our final experiment, students engaged in a variety of projects that called for student-to-student feedback within the wiki. In a second type of wiki feedback, teachers and students evaluated student presentations. Finally, at the end of the term, students selected the “best” of their responses and the “best” of their presentations, explained their choices, and discussed their areas of improvement as well as areas in which they still needed work. Following the same approach, they also evaluated the work of a partner, selected what they felt was their partner’s best work, and explained their choice. By using the threads at the bottom of each page, students could easily look back and discuss one another’s completed work, as well as reflecting on their own.

In Wiki Three, wiki-related activities and small group research projects addressed a variety of themes: social networking, stress, and wellness and health. Each group was responsible for their own research and for its organization into wiki-based presentations. Required to discuss and negotiate how best to present the information, students worked together to develop an introduction, a conclusion, and appropriate transitions. Articles that had served as source material could be accessed easily via links posted on the wiki to the original websites on the Internet so that other students could read and refer to them later. The students also researched EBSCOhost and LexisNexis databases to locate articles related to specific aspects of their research project. In their wiki presentations, they referred to highlights from the articles, and included quotations and statistics of particular relevance. A basic rule was that students had to provide access to their articles so that their classmates could read and offer their own comments. At times, students read the original article and the response of a classmate, and then replied with comments of their own, a kind of layered reflection that engaged students and encouraged a deeper level of critical thinking. Finally, in addition to group work on the wiki, students in the more advanced of our two classes created individual pages where they posted responses to assignments and wrote personal responses to articles and audio clips. Over the course of the semester, we gradually guided the students away from casual and colloquial responses toward a more formal and academic style.
From the beginning of our experience with wikis, we had been particularly interested in creating a community of learners that extended beyond the confines of the classroom so that our students would experience a genuine need for communication in English. We decided to experiment with the third wiki to see if we could use it to promote authentic student discussion around a theme of common interest. We wanted the discussion to be both academic and social, and therefore decided to use the wiki to support a field trip to the PS1 Contemporary Art Center, a nearby affiliate of the Museum of Modern Art.

During the visit to the museum, we took notes on the questions students asked about the exhibitions. One student documented the experience with photos which we posted on the wiki along with the questions that we had recorded. After the field trip, the students visited the wiki in pairs, discussed the questions and photographs, and added their own comments and questions to the threads. Through this experience, we realized that the wiki could easily be used not only for follow-up communicative activities but also in planning and preparing for future field trips.

**Wiki Three: Student Feedback**

Due to scheduling changes in the program, one of us used the third wiki with a low-intermediate listening/speaking class that met for just four hours a week. This new schedule represented a departure from previous semesters, in which the wikis had been a component of an eight-hour class that combined the skills of listening/speaking and reading. For logistical reasons, only the students in the more advanced, eight-hour class provided feedback at the end of the semester. The three questions to which they responded were:

- Which activity or activities have helped you the most in learning English?
- Which activity or activities were the most interesting to you?
- What part of working with a wiki has been the most enjoyable?

Of the sixteen students who responded, twelve felt that writing responses to images or readings and commenting on one another’s ideas were the most helpful activities. Representative comments included the following:

- “I think that the most useful activity was writing responses. It really helped students to improve vocabulary and analysis skills that are basics for attending college and getting a degree.”
“The activity that has helped me in learning English in our wiki is to use it for writing my reflections and responses about topics I studied.”

“The most important at my point of view is ‘the response’ because I can express by myself, researching in the Internet, and also I acquire knowledge step by step.”

In response to the second question, just over half of the students mentioned the use of wikis for presentation purposes as the most interesting activity. A few students commented specifically on the value of wikis for evaluating presentations, an activity designed to promote intentional reflection on learning strategies. Among the student comments were the following:

“The wiki is helpful during the presentations in class, and it is perfect to view how the others are evaluating my presentations by posting their comments. Really, I have learned a lot of thing from their comments.”

“Posting evaluations for other is helpful, but actually I wanted more criticisms or strict advice from others.”

“The most interesting activity was the use of the lab and to be able to talk with other students and correct each other.”

Opinions on the most enjoyable aspect of the wiki ranged from posting and sharing cultural information to interacting with other students and making group presentations. One student commented:

“Wiki has been the most enjoyable site for students because it lets you share information together, learning from each other, and seeing some image or photo from different countries.”

Another student summarized as “enjoyable” many of the advantages of wikis that we ourselves had come to recognize: “to research on internet, create my own opinion about the different topics, correcting my mistakes and growing up in the way to write and speak.”

Wiki Three: Teacher Reflections
Based on student response and progress, we can consider the experimental use of wikis to promote intentional learning to have been a success. Our concern over the appropriateness of wikis for listening and speaking classes was allayed by the frequency of presentations that required students to participate actively in group negotiation and
preparation. In addition, the wiki clearly helped students to reflect on and evaluate their own learning processes. However, some students were reluctant to provide direct commentary on a classmate’s work, and we realized that, as scaffolding for this intentional learning activity, we could have incorporated more guidance in giving constructive criticism in English. Nevertheless, at the end of the semester, approximately two-thirds of the class participated in the evaluation activities and provided comments on a partner’s wiki “portfolio” as well as on their own. In a long ten-week quarter, it would help to use such an activity not only at the end of the term but also at midterm.

In sum, several aspects of a wiki allow both teacher and student to participate in and benefit from intentional reflection. It is a simple process, for example, to highlight grammar or vocabulary errors in wikis, and we used this capability as a feedback tool in vocabulary and collocation assignments. Similarly, whenever students give oral presentations in a computer lab, they can receive immediate feedback from the teacher as well as from classmates who can offer their comments by posting a thread at the bottom of the presenter’s page. The comments can be posted either during the presentation itself or within two or three minutes of its conclusion, and the presenter can then respond to the feedback by replying to the thread. Teacher feedback on particular assignments can also be added to a thread at the bottom of each student page. It is also possible for an instructor to receive an email each time a student adds information to the wiki (accessible through “Settings/Email Notification”) – still another avenue for immediate teacher feedback and student response.

Conclusions: The Value of Wikis for the Practice of Reflection
Our wiki experience has led us to view wikis as technology tools that can facilitate the practice of reflection among ESL learners. Wikis are potential conduits for meaningful learning in all of its aspects, i.e., learning that is not only active and authentic but also collaborative, constructive, and intentional. We have found wikis to be successful in supporting collaborative learning through group projects and presentations both inside and outside the classroom. Students can also collaborate on the construction and design of the wiki, generating rich language as they navigate the wiki environment.

Second, wikis encourage constructive learning through the design of opportunities for students to research and collect information and to actively engage in constructing new knowledge in visible,
concrete ways. Wikis easily facilitate the design of assignments that require students to relate new information to their own individual backgrounds, to construct new perspectives on a variety of topics, and to share these perspectives with others. Finally, wikis provide a published record of student achievement, an advantage that is crucial for the promotion of intentional learning. Students can see physical evidence of their own accomplishments, as well as the accomplishments of their classmates, allowing for mutual reinforcement and more effective self-evaluation.

We are convinced that, facilitating reflection in all of its aspects, wikis offer productive potential for collaborative, constructive, and intentional learning in a focused, sharing, and reflective community of learners.

Works Consulted


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