Capturing Students' use of an Academic English On-line Resource: Informing Future Development

To address the university's e-learning strategy, to "embed diverse mechanisms of programme delivery, notably e-learning", and to achieve the strategic target of 100% of taught programmes having "a substantial e-learning component", the Language and Learning Unit at Queen Mary, University of London has launched a body of online EAP materials: "Academic English Online". This talk will, therefore, focus on how our students make use of this resource, and how this information is being used to inform subsequent adaptation of the materials.

The talk will include a brief overview of the materials themselves, along with an outline of the initial development and trialling process. It will then give examples of ways in which the material has been revised through the incorporation of: Jings, Makebeliefcomix and Articulate Engage software. We will then describe and discuss the processes whereby both qualitative and quantitative data on the usage of the materials by our students was collected. The use of CMC (computer mediated communication) tools - a web forum and chatroom - provided insights into the extent to which the materials succeeded in meeting student needs. In addition, we will outline the results of a small scale tracking project, including learning journal records and focus group interviews with students studying on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. We will also report on more quantitative descriptions of patterns of use, which we were able to obtain through the "Google Analytics" program. Finally, the use of blogs within a VLE, in which students reflected on their use of the learning objects within a blended learning environment, was also employed in order to provide us with more detailed and specific qualitative data.

The talk will conclude with an outline of our plans to further develop, promote and refine the materials to most effectively target learner needs.

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