

ELEARNING AND Y

Educational systems across the world are changing, and eLearning is one critical factor. How will this revolution affect your classes? As an English teacher in Austria, how can you use eLearning to your advantage? Read more to learn how you can get free access to an eLearning platform especially developed for teachers of English and their students.

eLearning in Practice

Possibly your educational institution uses Moodle or has a language lab with CD-ROMs. Possibly you have heard of acronyms such as: EPSS (Electronic Performance Support Systems), CBT (Computer-Based Training), IBT (Internet-Based Training) or WBT (Web-Based Training).

All of these are examples of eLearning.

eLearning is a very large "umbrella" category that includes instructional content provided via Internet, local area network (LAN) or CD-ROM/DVD. While these new learning options do not replace teachers, they do provide revolutionary opportunities.

For example, iTunesU enables students as well as the general public to have access to speeches, interviews, faculty presentations and other educational material produced by universities. MIT, Stanford and Duke University are just a few of the leading educational institutions with iTunesU programs.

Technology is being infused into the classroom (and into the boardroom) in countless ways; as a result, students of all ages and backgrounds are now rarely satisfied by simply memorizing the same content that other students memorized decades ago. They want fresh material, personalization, custom feedback and an entertaining learning approach.

Clearly, our role as teachers is changing as technology takes hold in daily life. We are often faced with multitasking

students running off to SMS or write emails during the breaks. We are asked for specialized vocabulary and extra resources for use outside of class, and we are expected to provide measurable results - quickly.

An eLearning Solution for Austrian Teachers

The "digital classroom" revolution poses an interesting question: What kind of eLearning resource best supports English teachers? The resource should cover general English topics (such as grammar, reading and listening) but also have a strong Business English component. Given the diversity of our students, it would be helpful if the resource provided some cross-cultural training as well.

Unfortunately, most products fall short of these goals. A lot of CD-ROMs have content shelf life too short for our rapidly changing times. Most eLearning resources focus on general English but are weak in Business English (or visa versa) and few effectively incorporate cross-cultural training.

When considering eLearning resources for educational programs, one must also consider the special challenges faced by academic institutions across the world. In Japan, for instance, a 2005 study by the National Institute of Multimedia Education found that 60% of the universities questioned had not implemented eLearning due to "a lack of budget," "a lack of personnel to provide technical support" and "a lack of infrastructure."

Considering all of these factors, the best resource is an eLearning platform (website) which teachers and students can access via passwords - anytime and anywhere. No need for language labs, technical support personnel or special infrastructure. The website should have new and relevant material added each month, and be responsive to the requests of its subscribers.

The ideal website would also provide special support for teachers. It would be an ongoing source of personal training for the teacher outside of the classroom, as well as a clear support for the teacher inside the classroom. It would eliminate the days of teachers standing beside copy machines printing homework assignments and it would enable teachers to have access to a wide range of specialized business vocabulary, already translated into various languages.

That website, English Training Live, has been in development for five years and is now complete. We are inviting **Teachers of English** in Austria members to try English Training Live at no expense.

Brief Pedagogical Concept

Because English Training Live is dedicated to being both dynamic and flexible, our pedagogical approach follows a systemic version of the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model of instructional design.

For example, English Training Live is developed on an ongoing basis by international educators working with a team of programmers who create/incorporate applicable eLearning technologies. As such, the site is dynamic, constantly growing and quick to respond to feedback and requests.

Regarding implementation, English Training Live is dedicated to supporting educators who use the site. To that end, a special "For Teachers" section has been developed which currently features extensive training materials for the General English part of the site. (Similar training materials are being developed for Business English and Cross-Culture.)

Formative and summative evaluation for the user comes via the many tests and quizzes available throughout the site. This includes "Mastery Quizzes" enabling

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the user to print certificates. Regarding the site itself, the Evaluation Phase is ongoing, and it benefits from our emphasis on eliciting and incorporating client feedback.

In addition, the English Training Live pedagogical approach is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). For instance, our Diagnostic Tests help the learner target his/her specific level and pinpoint areas for improvement. That meets the CEFR goal of facilitating comparison in a quantifiable manner.

In many ways, however, English Training Live surpasses CEFR expectations. While the site shares the CEFR emphasis on vocabulary acquisition, reading and listening, it also emphasizes grammar and includes comprehensive Business English and cross-cultural training. All elements are seamlessly integrated into the site's various offerings.

Here is a brief overview of what you will find on English Training Live:

- **Business English:** English Training Live features among the finest selections of Business English on the web.
- **General English:** Of course, the site also offers solid training in grammar, listening, reading, vocabulary and pronunciation.
- **Cross-Culture:** Our Cross-Culture section is a convenient and effective resource for those traveling abroad, welcoming foreign visitors or wanting to learn about other cultures.
- **Standardized Tests:** We just added practice materials for the TOEIC and will add a full-length TOEIC practice test in October 2010. More full-length TOEIC practice tests are coming, as well as a full TOEFL component.
- **Podcasts:** Each podcast runs around five minutes and comes with a pdf providing explanations of the target words and phrases, corresponding exercises, and in some cases, a partial transcript. (You can either click to play

the podcasts or else download them as mp3 files.)

- **Multilingual Approach:** A German-translated version of the website is online (with all instructions and vocabulary downloads translated into German).
- **International English:** Our subscribers can choose between US, British and Australian accents on all of our vocabulary recordings.
- **Targeted Training:** The English Training Live program is separated into ten levels, starting from Step 1 (Beginner) and finishing with Step 10 (Upper Advanced). Our quick and effective Diagnostic Tests target individual levels and pinpoint areas for improvement.
- **Knowledge Management:** Subscribers can keep track of their progress and even print Certificates of Achievement.
- **Support for Educators:** A Teachers' Manual is online, and ongoing free-of-charge teacher trainings are also available at educational programs which use the site. Specifically, one of our trainers will visit your school (at your request) every three to six months and discuss updates to the site as well as new classroom applications. For those educational-program subscribers located far outside of Vienna, this training may be conducted via conference call instead.

A Special Invitation to TEA Members

During this school year, we would like to make a special offer to TEA members: just send us an email, and we will send you a free two-week password to English Training Live. You can explore the full site and try its wide range of games and learning activities. You can print any or all of the 100 vocabulary pdfs and grammar notes on the site (all of which have been translated into German). You also are free to print any or all of the online Teachers' Manual as well as the Cross-Culture summaries too. No charge and no obligation.

If you later decide to join English Training Live as a subscriber either for yourself or for your class, we will offer you a special Teachers of English in Austria discount. But again, there is no obligation. This is a free opportunity for you to try a cutting-edge eLearning platform for English.

As educational systems across the world change, you can use that change to your advantage. Beyond a doubt, eLearning is the wave of the future. If you'd like to explore this new trend, just send an email to heather@englishtraininglive.com (say that you're a TEA member) and I will be happy to send you a free password.



Heather's international career in education has spanned 23 years and multiple fields. After receiving a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology, Heather joined the Peace Corps

to carry out development work in the Philippines. She then spent 12 years in Japan, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and conducting cross-cultural training for academic institutions and international business groups. Heather has also taught EFL in Mexico and the United States.

Currently based in Austria, Heather counts numerous governmental ministries and global financial institutions among her EFL and cross-culture clients. Heather specializes in teaching and writing material related to internationally-recognized standardized tests (including TOEIC, TOEFL, GMAT, SAT and the Cambridge Suite of Examinations). She is an accomplished public speaker and the author of two books.