English Learners & Academic Innovation

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Overview

Educational Technology (EdTech) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are rapidly transforming daily existence and educational environments, making it essential for English Learners (ELs) to possess the skills and knowledge to harness these technologies successfully and responsibly. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) envisions a future in which AI is a dynamic tool that personalizes learning, supports teaching practices, and prepares students for careers.

EdTech Strategies for English Learners

Technology can be intentionally used to achieve the dual goals of language development and content mastery, ensuring that instruction retains an appropriate level of rigor and proficiency.

Tailoring Learning to Individual Needs

Technology provides methods for differentiating instruction and personalizing the learning experience for EL students:

- Differentiated Instruction: Employ technology to create multiple pathways for EL students to access and demonstrate learning. For example, teachers can offer different proficiency levels of reading materials, provide audio versions of texts, or allow students to choose their preferred method of presenting information, such as creating a presentation, video, or podcast.
- Personalized Learning: Use technology, such as online platforms, to track student progress and adjust instruction accordingly, providing personalized feedback and adaptive exercises. This approach supports the goals of AI in education, which include tailoring instruction to each student's unique needs and pace.

Ensuring Access

Access to technology and digital tools ensures EL students can fully participate in grade-level content.

- Assistive Technology and Supports: Explore tools that support students, such as text-to-speech software, screen readers, and language translation software, to reduce linguistic load and provide scaffolding for students at all proficiency levels.
- Captions and Subtitles: Use captions and subtitles; they are logistically helpful for EL students. For example, students can turn on captions in Google Chrome to display captions for any video by navigating to Settings > Accessibility > Live Caption.

Enhancing Communication Skills

Technology can provide authentic opportunities for EL students to practice the listening and speaking domains.

- Voice Recording and Feedback: Utilize tools for students to record themselves speaking and receive feedback on pronunciation and fluency.
- Multimedia Projects: Encourage students to create presentations, videos, or podcasts to showcase their learning.

Artificial Intelligence: Integration and Guidance

Artificial Intelligence (AI) uses machine learning to identify patterns, make predictions, and solve complex problems. AI literacy is the skill set that enables people to critically understand, evaluate, and use AI systems and tools safely and effectively. AI literacy is an integral part of broader digital literacy.

LDOE's Vision and Applications of AI

The LDOE encourages the integration of AI to improve learning experiences by providing data-driven insights and increasing efficiency. In education, AI can:

- Personalize learning: Tailor instruction to each student's unique needs and pace.
- Increase engagement: Create interactive and immersive learning experiences.
- Enhance efficiency: Automate repetitive tasks so teachers can focus on individualized support.

Examples of AI applications include intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) and tools for automated feedback or grading.

Responsible Use: The Human AI Human (H-AI-H) Framework

AI can serve as a support tool to empower educators, not replace their expertise. The LDOE guidance emphasizes that human judgment and oversight are always essential to ensure accuracy and appropriateness. The "Human AI Human" (H-AI-H) framework guides responsible integration, ensuring that AI interactions begin and end with human reflection.

1. Human Inquiry: Start with a clear purpose, question, or problem. Avoid generic prompts, such as "write an essay".
2. AI for Production: Use AI to assist in drafting, brainstorming, or finding information.
3. Human Reflection: Critically review the AI's output, fact-check it, and refine it using human knowledge, creativity, and ingenuity.

AI has significant potential to amplify instruction, including personalizing learning and supporting instructional practices. However, AI is intended to support, not replace, educators. To utilize AI effectively and responsibly, thoughtful pre-work is essential. Prioritizing this intellectual preparation before AI utilization is key to strategically leveraging these resources to enhance student outcomes.

For educators still seeking an AI tool to support instruction, this checklist provides guidance for selecting technology tools.

- ✔ **Consider the students and identify the instructional needs.**
  - ❔ *Does this tool enhance the learning experience?*
- ✔ **Review current access to tools from the school system or school to determine if any tools meet the needs.**
  - ❔ *Do I already have access to something that will suit my needs?*
- ✔ **Ensure the tool is compatible with the current EdTech ecosystem.**
  - ❔ *Does this work on my network and with my device?*
- ✔ **Test the tool first to ensure user-friendliness and seamless integration.**
  - ❔ *Will it be easy for students to learn how to use it?*
- ✔ **Ensure data privacy and security in EdTech tools to create a safe learning environment.**
  - ❔ *Is it safe? Students should not be required to create accounts or enter any personally identifiable information.*

Safeguarding Data and Academic Integrity

When using AI tools, particularly those that collect data, schools and school systems must prioritize safety and comply with applicable laws and regulations.

- Data Privacy and Security: Procedures must be in place to protect student information and comply with federal and state regulations, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA), and the Louisiana Student Privacy Law (R.S. 17:3914). For greater control and stronger security, schools should use system-approved tools and prefer closed-system applications.
- Academic Integrity: Students should be taught about the responsible use of AI and must be honest about their use of AI, citing it as a source when required. Teachers can vary assignments, use open-ended questions, or require students to show their work (e.g., submitting drafts or outlines) to discourage reliance on entirely AI-generated content.

Applying the C.R.E.A.T.E. Framework for EL Support

The C.R.E.A.T.E. framework provides a structured approach for designing effective AI prompts. Teachers can leverage this framework to create customized scaffolds and resources specific to their EL students' needs and language proficiency levels. The following prompts are examples of what educators can enter into an AI platform (e.g., Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, or ChatGPT) to obtain the desired output.

Component	Description	Example for EL Instruction
C	**Character:** Describe the specific role the AI should assume.	*"You are an expert instructional coach specializing in scaffolding complex high school texts for ELs."*
R	**Request:** Clearly and specifically define what the AI should do.	*"I want you to provide three simplified sentence frames that help a Level 3 (Developing) EL student analyze the author's purpose in this argumentative essay."*
E	**Examples:** Provide examples of the desired format, style, or level of detail.	*"For example: focus on starting sentences with academic verbs like 'The author argues...' and 'The text emphasizes...'"*
A	**Additions:** Refine the task by describing a point of view or style to use.	*"Base the sentence frames on the academic language needed for social studies content, and ensure they are encouraging and actionable."*
T	**Type of Output:** Specify the desired format and length of the response.	*"Limit your response to three distinct, numbered sentence frames."*
E	**Extras:** Include any further information or specific constraints.	*"The student is currently struggling with understanding causal relationships in text."*

Practical AI Examples for EL Support

AI technologies can be strategically integrated into the classroom to support ELs across all language domains.

Domain	Function and Strategy	LDOE Example Aligned with Guidance
Reading/Writing	**Differentiating Text Complexity:** Use generative AI to adjust the linguistic complexity of reading materials and assignments while retaining grade-level content and rigor.	An educator uses an AI tool (via a strategic prompt) to generate a simplified summary of a historical document, ensuring the core concepts and Tier 3 vocabulary remain while simplifying sentence structure for Level 2 students.
Speaking/Listening	**Pronunciation and Fluency Practice:** Utilize AI-powered intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) to provide immediate, individualized feedback on oral output.	An EL student uses an AI-powered reading tutor, such as Google Read-Along, to practice reading a passage aloud and receives real-time feedback on pronunciation and pacing to build fluency.
Writing/Assessment	**Teacher Efficiency in Feedback:** Teachers use AI as a thought partner to streamline the creation of specific and clear feedback for EL writing samples.	A teacher uses an AI assistant (following the H-AI-H model) to analyze a student's paragraph and requests three specific, actionable suggestions targeting the use of academic linking words, freeing the teacher to focus on content mastery during revision.

By focusing on effective strategies and prioritizing student needs, technology and AI can be leveraged to create engaging and personalized learning experiences for all ELs.

Please contact digitallearning@la.gov with questions.

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