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 www.apacall.org ASIA-PACIFIC ASSOCIATION FOR COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING		
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year has been a bit quieter than previous years mainly due to the unexpected cancellation of the GLoCALL conference. Nevertheless, our APACALL members have been working hard to improve their practice while enhancing their research profiles. It is hoped that in 2017 we can celebrate our 10th GLoCALL conference and generate more ideas and energy for TELLRN projects. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has actively engaged with APACALL activities. I wish you all the best and look forward to working with you again in the coming year.

Jeong-Bae Son
President

NEWS FROM THE MEMBERS (January – December 2016)

► Publications

- Alm, A. (2016). Amateur online interculturalism in foreign language education. In S. Papadima-Sophocleous, L. Bradley, & S. Thouësny (Eds.), *CALL communities and culture – Short papers from EUROCALL 2016* (pp. 1-7). Dublin: Research-publishing.net.
- Alm, A. (2016). Creating willingness to communicate through L2 blogging. *CALL-EJ*, 17(1), 67-79. Available: <http://callej.org/journal/17-1/Alm2016.pdf>
- McCarty, S., Obari, H., & Sato, T. (2016). Implementing mobile language learning technologies in Japan. Singapore: Springer. <Brochure including info for reviewers: <http://book.waoe.org>>
- Nozawa, K. (2016). Enhancing participatory culture and increasing digital literacy (DL) through digital storytelling (DST) in an English as a foreign language program. *Studies in Language Science*, 6, 25-39. Graduate School of Language Education and Information Science, Ritsumeikan University.
- Park, S.-S., & Son, J.-B. (2016). Academic expectations and learning styles of Arabic international students at an Australian university. In S. O'Neill & H. van Rensburg (Eds.), *Global language policies and local educational practices and cultures* (pp. 258-279). Blue Mounds, WI: Deep University Press.

STORY OF INTEREST

Learning2gether: An open project available to APACALL for online collaboration

By Vance Stevens (English Faculty, Higher Colleges of Technology, CERT, KBZAC, Al Ain, UAE)

Learning2gether is a podcast blog that has broadcast over 350 weekly episodes since September, 2010. The project is the initiative of Vance Stevens, one of two Vice Presidents of APACALL. The format of each episode is informal conversations with teaching practitioners who wish to share expertise in an online webinar format with a podcast audience and community of practice interested in the field of educational technology and language learning.

Learning2gether operates through two portals on the web, a PBWorks wiki (free), and a WordPress blog (nominal costs for hosting covered by the project manager). The underlying assumption of Learning2gether is that anyone who wants to share with the community can join the wiki and propose an event by announcing it in the wiki. In practice this rarely happens (presenters are normally invited), but that is the reason that the landing page is a wiki where any colleague who requests access can initiate an event or a discussion.

The wiki home page of Learning2gether is <http://learning2gether.pbworks.com>. Here you can find information on how to participate and a link to the calendar of upcoming events <http://learning2gether.pbworks.com/volunteersneeded>. There is a shortcut to the next upcoming event, <http://tinyurl.com/learning2gether>, and a convenient index of all previous episodes, with links to the posts for each event at the Learning2gether blog archive, <http://learning2gether.net>. This is the archive landing page, where you can find show notes and links to original online recordings of each episode wherever it was held (webinar spaces include Bb Collaborate, Adobe Connect, WiZiQ, Hangouts on Air, etc.) plus embedded YouTube and mp3 renditions where available, and any graphics or text transcripts preserved. Recent topics discussed include digital badges, the role of drama in language development, using web chat apps in teaching writing, and Minecraft as a platform for language development and teacher professional development. Topics and online venues are chosen whenever possible by interested participants and volunteer presenters. In most cases, presenters are awarded digital badges through Credly, <http://credly.com>, another (freemium) initiative of LearningTimes.

This project is different from other similar webinars in that it encourages genuine conversations between experts and participants. Many who are invited on the program prepare PowerPoint slides or other demonstration or presentation materials, but participant microphones are almost always made available, and participants are free to ask questions and dialog with the presenters. So, unlike with other webinars of this nature, presenters may dominate the proceedings but do not control them. Thus the atmosphere of the podcasts is informal when compared to many other educator webinars, which typically provide mic access only to presenters and to moderators. Although participants in most webinars can usually interact with facilitators in text chat, as they can also do with Learning2gether, the fact that participants can feel free to actually converse with presenters is a signature aspect of this podcast series.

The podcast was conceived as an open initiative and has carried forward for all these years without funding or support, apart from a grant by LearningTimes, <http://learningtimes.com>, of use of a Bb Collaborate room called Webheads Virtual Office. Not only has this grant and use of this room been renewed year after year for the past decade, but LearningTimes have provided multiple rooms as an extension of the grant for online conferences and use by CALL-IS at recent annual TESOL conferences (so that selected on-site CALL presentations and seminar events can be webcast worldwide). Thus Webheads in Action and Learning2gether are able to invite associated altruistically motivated and non-profit professional organizations to share their resources. Another example of this is the availability of the LearningTimes Webheads Virtual Office for use by moderators and participants in the annual 5-week professional development sessions running (since 2001) under the auspices of Electronic Village Online, or EVO, at <http://evosessions.pbworks.com>.

Bb Collaborate has been just one online meeting space that Learning2gether has been able to use. There are of course other free spaces, such as Google's Hangouts on Air, which has long served Learning2gether as it did the wider connectivist educational community -- until just this past September, when Google made a critical change to its support of streaming HoA. Rather than continue Google+ support of one-click streaming of HoA, Google shifted that support to YouTube/Live. As a result of this move, in order to schedule and stream a HoA, users now have to download and install their own encoder software and configure it correctly in order to stream the HoA via YouTube/Live. Thankfully, open source encoder software exists (e.g., Open Broadcast Software) as does sufficiently robust (in freemium mode) encoder software, such as XSplit.

If you are not entirely following this, you're not the only one; suffice it to say that HoA still functions as before as a spontaneous online meeting space, but you can no longer use it to announce and stream webinar events unless you can get your mindset around the encoder configuration. Fortunately Learning2gether has through much trial and error worked out how to do all that.

As this regards APACALL, Learning2gether could serve as a base for community collaboration if members thought it beneficial to get together online and converse with one another a few times a year. APACALL's salient forums include its newsletter, a conference, and its occasional publications. These are all endeavors of which we can be proud, but what is lacking is a means to interact as an organization more frequently, socially, and in real time.

If members were interested, occasional APACALL events could be staged through Learning2gether, but the impetus for this must come from the membership under the guidance of the executive director. One purpose of this article is to make members aware that one of the members of the executive committee has been laying down a track record on a project that could be utilized to whatever extent desirable by APACALL members. This could be as a resource for professional development in which they could participate live, or as a library of archived topics available for study at after-the-fact. Or APACALL members could use Learning2gether to host their own webinar events if they wished, and to do this you could contact me (vancestev@gmail.com) for further assistance.

