classroom for reinforcement with other activities and more one-on-one help from the teacher. While this article doesn’t focus on assessment, I would like to note that an instructor can easily assign and grade homework assignments and quizzes through Canvas as well, where the answers are loaded in and the grading program grades the assignment for you.

These are just a few possible ideas for creating a hybrid class. We are only limited by our imaginations and the limits of the technology. As imagination spurs the development of technology, so can technology encourage us to new heights of imagination!

### Media Review: Livemocha

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Livemocha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URL:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.livemocha.com/">http://www.livemocha.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Livemocha, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Product</td>
<td>Website to develop reading and speaking fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum hardware requirements</td>
<td>A personal computer with Internet connection, speakers, microphone to record voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target languages</td>
<td>American English, Spanish, Persian, French, Hindi, German, Italian, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, Russian, Mandarin, Icelandic, Korean, Arabic, Turkish, Polish, Ukrainian, European Portuguese, Greek, Dutch, Estonian and Romanian, Bulgarian, Finnish, Hungarian, Croatian, Czech, Slovak, Urdu, Catalan, Swedish, Hebrew, and Esperanto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target users</td>
<td>Beginning and intermediate learners of several languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Livemocha**

Computer access and other technological literacies are vital for learners in the 21st century. The literacy framework by Cummins et al., (2007, P. 109), which covers major principles of learning and literacy development, provides guidance for reviewing the language learning website *Livemocha*. They proposed the following questions which we have used as a template to review the technology-supported instruction in *Livemocha* website:

1. Does the instruction provide cognitive challenges and opportunities for deep processing of meaning?
2. Does the instruction relate to prior knowledge and experiences derived from students’ homes and communities?
3. Does the instruction promote active, self-regulated, collaborative inquiry?
4. Does the instruction promote extensive, engaged reading and writing across the curriculum?
5. Does the website promote students to develop strategies for effective reading, writing, and learning?

6. Does the instruction promote effective involvement and identity on the part of the student?

We evaluated the website from the perspective of a beginner learning American English and signed up with our primary languages- Tamil and Arabic. Our review provides an overview of the website design and lesson structure and moves on to evaluating the possibilities for multi-literacy learning based on the framework of Cummins et al. (2007).

Evaluation

1. Does the instruction provide cognitive challenges and deep processing of meaning?

Basic cognitive skills involved in teaching are listening (process auditory information), reading (recognition of sight words and decode new words), comprehension (understanding what is read), and formulation (access new information and express it). According to Cummins et al. (2007, P.237) levels of cognition are evoked in tasks set for the student. The higher-order thinking skills involve analysis and synthesis of information, while the lower-order thinking involves rote memory and direct application of information.

For example, in a sample audio exercise (Fig. 1) the student hears “I am good. Thank you. And you?” The listener/learner needs to order words correctly, including words with punctuation, to create sentences.

The cognitive skills involved in solving the exercises provided in the activities are listening (when words are spoken), reading (the tiles), comprehension (picking the right words), and formulation (of the complete sentence). This is lower-order thinking and involves direct application of information presented to the learner.

Opportunities for meaningful analysis of information are required for deep processing of information. Deep processing involves giving words a meaning or linking them with previous knowledge. There were very few activities on the website that provided such opportunities.

Figure 1. Sample audio lesson presented in multiple inputs
2. Does the instruction relate to prior knowledge and experiences derived from student’s homes and communities?

Cummins et al (2007, P.43) indicate that prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts significantly influence what learners notice about their environment and how they organize and interpret it. The site is not intended for introducing learners to the English alphabet. In order to use this site, students should have recognition of words, a rudimentary sense of grammar, and understand sentence structure. A degree of comfort, exposure, and familiarity with the language is also required to use this site effectively. When the students come with all the requirements listed above, it is possible for them to build on their background knowledge by performing the exercises.

However, a significant drawback in the site is the lack of diversity of people depicted in the lessons. The majority of the models are fair and slim. In a foreign language-learning context, having more diversity is advantageous. Another issue is that even the most basic conversational phrases are depicted with unnecessary degree of glamour (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Example of glamour in basic conversational phrases](image)

3. Does the instruction promote active self-regulated collaborative inquiry?

Donovan and Bransford (2005), as well as Cummins et al. (2007, P. 43) point out that a self-monitoring approach can help students develop the ability to take control of their own learning, consciously define learning goals, and monitor their progress in achieving them. Livemocha strongly promotes active self-regulated and collaborative inquiry.

Additionally, tools within the website help students stay motivated by rewarding ‘mochapoints’ for lessons completed and teacher points for supporting collaborative inquiry. Students are encouraged to help each other providing opportunities to initiate a dialogue, participate, and be heard. It also facilitates participating in discussions in a different language.

Numerous opportunities for social networking are provided for facilitating peer collaboration. The social setup is similar to the familiar web 2.0 tools such as Facebook or Orkut, where one can start an account with their
own profile and invite friends, search friends within Livemocha and communicate socially with them. The option to chat, for example, connects the learner to a wide online Livemocha community with both native and nonnative speakers from around the world. These options are depicted in Figure 3.

![Image of Livemocha interface](image)

**Figure 3.** Examples of tools available for collaborative inquiry on Livemocha

4. **Does the instruction promote extensive engaged reading and writing across the curriculum?**

Cummins et al. (2007, P. 48) reference Guthrie (2004) when defining Engagement - the time on task, enthusiasm and engagement of literacy, strategies to deepen comprehension, and the amount and diversity of literacy practices in and out of school. Livemocha fulfills the components of engaged reading and writing both in the curriculum presented and outside of the curriculum. Much of the enthusiasm is derived from enjoyment and collaboration. Students are able to submit responses to lessons or activities (that involve reading, writing and speaking) to be reviewed by other members of the community. Outside of lessons, students are encouraged to write in English by sharing a story, or picture.

Livemocha provides opportunities for online collaboration for rating and correcting a submission and ensures that language is used in varied roles. This also facilitates a productive, collaborative, learning environment for the participants. Further, ample time is provided for listening, reading, and writing (includes chatting and writing stories) about their daily life. These activities count towards the quantity of time spent in learning and practicing a new language.

Engagement is further facilitated by connecting with native speakers by means of stories, photos, or weblogs, and to receive comments online (Figure 4). All these activities enhance learners’ self-confidence and their sense of identity. It enables students to see themselves as learners, creators, and thinkers and not merely as passive readers. When individuals take the role of educators to educate and assess students while using technology and software resources, they are practicing skills that can help them to be better thinkers and learners (Corio, 2003).
5. **Does the website promote students to develop strategies for effective reading, writing, and learning?**

Cummins et al. (2007, P. 91) observe that, “the failure to realize the educational potential of technology has much more to do with pedagogy than with technology itself.” Imaginative inquiry-focused teaching with or without technology is often considered “off task,” in school settings. **Livemocha** uses functions available on most modern computers (e.g. emailing, photos, downloading, and audio-recording) to support knowledge construction and critical thinking to learn with rather than merely instructing the learner.

Learning strategies of **Livemocha** such as “learn and practice”, and created “flashcards” all provide opportunities that the learners can control, spur active engagement, and encourage creation of measurable output. Non-formal reading and writing opportunities are also provided by cultural exploration around the world (Figure 5).

Effective opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and learning are provided in the context of the lessons and in a social setting. The student must complete activities, for which the student can earn ‘mochapoints’ before proceeding to the next level.

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**Figure 4.** Example of engagement by social interaction in Livemocha.com

**Figure 5.** Example of cultural exploration of the world.
6. Does the instruction promote effective involvement and identity on the part of the student?

The technology supported instruction provided by Livemocha involves learners, especially teens and adolescents, who enhance part of their own identity by choosing it—a social and academic praxis—‘that is cool.’ Since learning in this situation also involves many other learners of the digital learning generation, the students feel a sense of connection that is meaningful to them (Pianfetti, 2001). It supports the interests of adolescents who work on their building identity through learning the language, while practicing social relationships with Livemocha learning community simultaneously. It also challenges students to interact with native and non-native English speakers effectively (Figure 6). When a deep connection is created between students they can share their stories or pictures, and learning becomes more personalized and interactions take place even in a language they are learning.

![Livemocha screenshot](image.png)

Figure 6. Examples of opportunities to promote effective involvement

Conclusion

Livemocha is suitable for students from variety of backgrounds to learn, practice, and develop competencies in an increasingly culturally-diverse world. The diversity of languages offered in the website and the methods are somewhat aligned with the suggestions of the New London Group (1996). Livemocha presents students with active, challenging tasks that requires them to read, write, speak, and think in new and demanding ways. By facilitating interactions with native speakers and also through the tasks, learners can negotiate their success.

The language learning is also placed in a social context with peer group networking. Livemocha provides ample opportunities for self-regulated collaborative inquiry. The students are engaged in a lively manner, and the learning tools are aptly designed. The website provides multimodal opportunities for learning which retaining a high degree of live engagement by the learners.

References


Accessed 2.7.11


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**Erratum:** Melissa Van De Wege, author of Arabic Rhetoric in Arabic-speaking Student Essays: Main idea, parallelism, and word repetition, was erroneously listed as a Fulbright Scholar in the WAESOL Spring 2013 issue. She is not a Fulbright Scholar at this moment in time.