

Appendix E: *English program rings up success.* An article about the eslau.ca site

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GLOBAL TV

Wreckage from a tractor-trailer lies at the bottom of a ravine on the Pembina River.

## Truck flips off bridge into ravine

Journal Staff  
EDMONTON

The truck went through the barrier and the cab disconnected from the trailer. The cab then continued to tumble down the river valley to the bank

## English program rings up success

KEITH GEREIN  
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EDMONTON

A unique pilot project from Athabasca University has proven it's possible for new immigrants to learn English through their cellphones.

The "mobile-learning" technology, which allows users to take lessons while riding the bus or waiting in line, was a hit with three groups of immigrants who tried it out this year, said Steve Schafer, Athabasca's director of library services.

He said the success of the project, believed to be the first of its kind in Canada, demonstrates that the concept could be used to help students in many different fields.

"This was a confirmation of our belief that students enjoy the convenience and flexibility that a mobile device affords," he said.

Earlier this year, Athabasca set up a website containing 86 lessons for those studying English as a Second Language.

The website was designed with a special technology that automatically detects what device a person is using to access the site, such as a desktop computer, Internet-capable cellphone or a BlackBerry. If someone uses a cellphone to go on the site, the display changes to fit the phone's screen.

Users can read the English grammar lessons and then do the related exercises. There are a variety

of questions asked, including true/false, multiple choice, matching and numerical response. Students can answer them by pressing the buttons on their cellphone.

Nearly 70 per cent of the immigrants who tried the technology in the pilot project said they found it improved their learning experience, although they indicated it would never serve as a substitute for a teacher in a classroom.

Some also suggested they would rarely use their cellphone in this way because of the cost of Internet access, while others said they would learn more if audio files were included.

Project co-ordinator Tony Tin said the idea with the ESL website was to make it as simple as possible, so that anyone with a basic \$50 cellphone could use it. This means there are limitations in the way content can be presented, but emerging technology may soon make it easier to include graphics, colour, sound and other extras, he said.

Schafer said he hopes to take the mobile-learning concept further by adapting it for other students. Athabasca is looking at developing some cellphone-accessible content for an astronomy course.

Officials at the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers have also expressed interest in employing the technology. Immigrants could use their cellphones to read information about getting settled in Edmonton, Schafer said.

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