TET1 Task 3: Technology Evaluation

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A Written Project Presented to the Faculty of the Teachers College of
Western Governors University
TET1 Task 3: Technology Evaluation

Instructional Setting

The Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIEC) is located on Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) in San Antonio Texas. Our institute is one of the largest in the world with the mission of training students in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). At any one time there are hundreds of teachers either on our campus or on overseas training assignments.

We sometimes seek out useful software and online tools they can use to supplement the curriculum of our courses. One software we use at DLIELC is not an English learning tool at all, but rather is a flight simulator. Many of our students are going on to aviation training on one airframe or another and many already know how to fly. Our task is to help students learn to communicate while flying in their follow-on training and one of the most effective ways we have found to do this is to exercise their communication skills while they are also flying and navigating, as would be the case in a real aircraft.

Audience

The primary audience for this evaluation is the aviation English teaching staff at Defense Language Institute English Language Center. These instructors currently use the flight simulator with their classes, but technical limitations in our current software often make this task more frustrating than it should be.

Evaluation Tools
There are almost too many software evaluation tools on the Internet to count. In choosing the tool I will be using to evaluate X-Plane 11 I paired this down to a couple and ultimately chose one. The two tools I narrowed my choices down to were the *Criteria Checklist for Evaluating Educational Software* from Brighthub Education at [http://www.brighthubeducation.com/teaching-methods-tips/105926-how-to-evaluate-educational-software/](http://www.brighthubeducation.com/teaching-methods-tips/105926-how-to-evaluate-educational-software/) and the Software Evaluation Form from Lincoln Junior High School in Lincoln, Illinois at [http://www.lincolnjhs.com/files/Tech/Educational_Software_Evaluation_Form.pdf](http://www.lincolnjhs.com/files/Tech/Educational_Software_Evaluation_Form.pdf). Many of the other forms I found were just too detailed for my purposes or pertained specifically to early childhood education. These two were more generic while still hitting on some of the areas I felt were important.

Of these two assessments I chose the one from Brighthub only because the Lincoln Junior High form was more specifically for students at that grade level and because it asked the evaluator which of the language arts, math, science, or social studies content areas it pertained to, which seemed to not be relevant to our curriculum. The Brighthub format asks many of the same questions without getting as far into the weeds.
A Criteria Checklist for Evaluating Educational Software

Use the following checklist to help you analyze and assess the usefulness of educational software that you are considering for your school or district. Rate each category on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest and 3 being the highest.

Software Title: X-Plane 11

Company/Website: http://www.x-plane.com/

Date of Analysis: 11 November 2016

Completed by: Charles Rich

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>n/a</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content is appropriate for a classroom setting.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Software is engaging and uses multimedia elements.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aligns well with content standards and benchmarks.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Caters to multiple learning styles.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has fresh, ongoing, and up to date content.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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## SUPPORT

| Company has a dedicated support structure. | X |
| Teacher materials and instructional guides included. | X |
| Software updates are regular and free. | X |

## ASSESSMENT

| Includes a built-in assessment module. | X |
| Student scores can be logged, printed, and/or exported. | X |
| Assessment is valid and aids instructional planning. | X |

## COST

| Software offers good value for money. | X |
| Software requires no further hardware purchases. | X |

## EASE OF USE

| Software title has content that is easy to navigate. | X |
| Includes clear, student-friendly instructions. | X |
Has a simple method for saving/printing/exporting work.  

REVIEWS

A trial copy was available for in-house evaluation.  
Software receives favorable impartial online reviews.  
Staff members who used this software liked it.  
Students who used this software liked it.  
Other schools/districts recommended this title.

Additional Notes:
The current flight simulator, Microsoft Flight Simulator (FSX), is out of date and no longer serves the purpose for which we use it. We use the simulator for student practice of air traffic control radio calls while collaterally tasked.

X-plane costs $59.99 per seat and is under current and constant development, unlike FSX which was last developed nearly ten years ago.

X-Plane scenery is near photo quality and the ATC radar and communications are much more realistic and reliable than what we have now.

Findings and Recommendations

I was recently asked by one of our aviation subject matter experts (SME) what tool we might be able to use to replace our aging flight simulator software. We often have to coax our current software into doing what we need it to and cross our fingers that it won’t crash mid
simulation. I had similar difficulties with it at home, especially since it was developed for Windows XP and our machines run Windows 7 and soon will run Windows 10.

This conversation has come up previously in the past and I purchased X-Plane 10 for use at home to see if it fit our needs. This has been a long conversation and now version 11 is out. My recommendations for the current version are that we download the trial version and test it in our aviation lab. If it works as well as version 10 has at home I see no reason why we shouldn’t proceed with purchase. X-Plane is not the only flight simulation software available, but it is the one I feel best suits our purposes.

Given that I have a history with the product, I would like to have other instructors work with it and give their feedback before making a recommendation to management for acquisition. The areas we will need to concentrate on in testing are the clarity of radio communications, ease of use, and accuracy of the aircraft controls and ATC radars. Some of these would be tested by the SMEs and others by the instructors.

X-Plane is not currently on the Government Services Authorized (GSA) vendor list so we would have to seek a waiver or talk with the X-Plane software provider about getting on the list prior to being able to purchase the software, so acquisition could be a fairly long process.

Despite some obvious hurdles to purchasing this software I do believe it is the best option and that we may soon be forced to replace our current system due to obsolescence, or to do without it entirely.
References

