Heather Bonikowski

French instructor, Austin Community College in Austin, Texas

iLrn™ Keeps Heather Bonikowski's Online French Students on Track

Heather Bonikowski is a French instructor at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas. She has used the *Horizons* textbook for her French I and II courses since 2003, and uses iLrn in conjunction with the textbook. Heather is teaching a self-design online version of French I and II.

ASSIGNING ILRN EXERCISES KEEPS STUDENTS ON TRACK

Heather has found that keeping students on pace with the lesson is a major challenge when teaching online. "In an online language learning environment, you cannot let students self-pace [because] it's human nature to procrastinate," said Heather. In order to keep students on track with the lesson plan, Heather assigns a combination of online and offline learning exercises for students. She assigns exercises from the *Horizons* ebook, and when students reach the end of a lesson plan, they are assigned the interactive eSam exercises in iLrn. "For every unit, [students] have a homework grade from iLrn, and for that I [assign] credit or no credit. They have to attempt every assigned exercise and average 70% or better for the unit homework. As long as they meet that criteria, they receive credit for the homework," she said. Heather gives students credit for the eSam assignments in order to help them master the material. "The idea is to encourage them to do the practice that needs to be done to be successful, she explained. "Language learning is cumulative, and if students skip sections, they really won't have the foundation they need to move to the next lesson."

PRE- AND POST-TESTS HELP STUDENTS PREPARE

Heather believes the pre- and post-tests are a good way for students to measure their mastery of a lesson prior to the exam. "I tell students to use the pre- and post-tests to prepare for the exams," said Heather. If a student comes to Heather and says they are having difficulty in the course, the first thing she asks is if they have taken the pre- and post-tests. "I ask 'Have you taken the pre- and post-exams? Have you taken them closed book? That will help you understand what needs work before you take the test and move on to the next lesson,'" she said.

AUTO-GRADING SAVES TIME AND PROVIDES INSTANT STUDENT FEEDBACK

Heather has found that iLrn's grading tools not only help save her time, but provide students with valuable feedback. "I like that students are getting feedback right away, because they are able to remediate their mistakes and avoid repeating the same mistake over and over," said Heather. Additionally, different grading options allow Heather to provide general feedback on critical areas for the entire class. "I like the option of

CHALLENGE

- Keeping students on pace with each lesson is a major challenge when teaching online foreign language courses, as students tend to procrastinate and quickly fall behind.

SOLUTION

- iLrn (in conjunction with *Horizons* textbook)

RESULT

- Students now have the tools to stay on task with each lesson, and the instructor can see ahead of time where students might stumble; different grading options allow her to provide general feedback on critical areas for the entire class.

being able to grade by student submission, assignment or question," said Heather, "I knew by grading a recent assignment that everyone was going to miss a particular question, and they did." With the option of providing feedback by submission, Heather was able to insert a detailed response that outlined the errors most of the students were making on that particular question. "I was able to cut and paste it into each submission," she said. "This is very helpful in the online environment where it's difficult to make general announcements or points. I was able to write one thoughtful note and distribute it to all of the students in their feedback."

Overall, Heather believes iLrn is an asset to teaching her online French I course. "Getting students to stay on track in an online language course is difficult, but iLrn helps keep them on task," she said.

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