



## **Promising Efforts, and Hoping for More: A Review of Best Practices from 20 Online Language Programs**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses “best practices” in online language learning programs according to a variety of evaluative angles. The discussion is based on a review of over 20 online language programs, including both commercially- and educationally-oriented programs. The presentation gives a brief explanation of the criteria used and determined best practices for the following areas: Interactive Modules; Computer-scored assessments; Written assessments; Oral assessments; Reference materials; Use of rich texts; Tools for getting into rich texts; User Interface; Voice Recognition; Teacher Feedback tools; Interpersonal Communication; Culture Assignments; Cultural Comparisons; Linguistic Comparisons; Connections to other disciplines; Engaging target-language Communities; and Leveraging Synchronous Sessions. The discussion will then turn to a more in-depth discussion of two of these areas, namely: Tools for getting into rich texts, and Leveraging synchronous sessions. The hope is not to determine which is the overall best program, but rather which elements from a range of programs are the strongest, or suggest where the market is heading. In this way, we can gain a grounded sense for what is (and is not) happening in this market, and can point to ready examples of promising efforts.