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### Why I love OLE

The last 20 years has seen a significant increase in the importance placed on communicative proficiency, both written and spoken, in our teaching of second languages. The OLE system is a tool that has allowed me to promote my students spoken oral proficiency in ways that were never possible before. Students' success in learning a second language depends to a large extent on the amount of time that they spend on useful and beneficial tasks. To promote proficiency, it is very important to ensure that students are working outside the classroom, as well as inside the classroom. When you ask a student to write or listen or read outside the classroom, you can ask for some evidence that demonstrates that some time was spent on accomplishing the task. And the student is motivated to put effort into accomplishing the task, knowing that they will be evaluated on the evidence produced. With speaking practice, it is difficult to get this evidence.

However, using the OLE system has allowed me to assign my students a variety of oral proficiency development tasks to be performed outside of class and to have a concrete "performance" that I can evaluate. The fact that students know that their oral performances will be preserved and listened to for evaluation, motivates them to practice those performances multiple times before submitting them for evaluation. This repeated practice of oral skills, both mechanical and creative, is extremely beneficial for developing language proficiency. Asking students to perform their oral assignments on OLE also frees up class time for more creative and interactive communicative activities. Spending class time with students listening to one student do an oral presentation is not, in my estimation, an optimal way for all students to develop communicative skills. It also produces a great deal of stress for some students, which can be counterproductive to their developing proficiency, especially in the beginning stages of proficiency development. And yet it is important for the individual student to have the experience of preparing for and delivering oral performances. The OLE system makes it possible for me to give individual students that very important practice that they need to develop their oral proficiency, without asking all other students in the class to spend their time listening to that performance. At conferences and teacher training sessions, I regularly show other teachers of Arabic what we are doing with the OLE system at the University of Arizona and it has been received with great enthusiasm. I hope that we will soon be able to have support materials so that we can begin to promote the use of the OLE system outside of the university.

Last year, the University of Arizona, in cooperation with the American Association of teachers of Arabic, launched a nationwide Arabic poetry recitation competition which we hope to make a regular annual event in the future. Without the OLE system this endeavor would not have been possible, or at least would have been much more difficult to implement.