E-Learning Project Part 1: Needs Assessment

English Across America: Culture and Language in U.S. Regions

Cindy Richard

Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

EDTC 6358: Theory and Practice of E-Learning

Dr. Maru Perez

March 12, 2026

Introduction

English learners often focus primarily on grammar, vocabulary, and formal communication skills. While these areas are essential, they do not fully prepare students for authentic communication with native speakers or for interpreting cultural meaning embedded in language. Regional variation in language use – such as differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural references – plays a significant role in everyday communication in the United States. Without exposure to these variations, learners may struggle to understand informal conversations, media, or culturally embedded expressions.

Students enrolled in Yulia Pleshchynska's English courses at King Danylo University in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine have expressed curiosity about American culture and language differences across regions of the United States. All frequently consume American social media, streaming media, and films, and some have relatives or acquaintances living in U.S. cities such as New York and Boston, which increases the relevance of cultural knowledge related to American English usage. However, the current curriculum primarily emphasizes general English proficiency and does not explicitly address regional linguistic diversity or the cultural influences that shape language use in the United States.

The gap between the current state and the desired state lies in students' limited awareness of regional language variation and its cultural context. Ideally, students should possess a broader understanding of how American English varies geographically and how historical and cultural influences shape those differences. Increasing awareness of regional linguistic diversity will help learners better interpret authentic language encountered in conversations, media, and international communication.

To address this gap, a short, self-paced e-learning module titled *English Across America: Culture and Language in U.S. Regions* will be developed. The module will introduce learners to cultural and linguistic features associated with five major regions of the United States. By expanding learners' cultural and linguistic awareness, the course will support improved listening comprehension, enhance intercultural communication

skills, and encourage greater curiosity about global English usage. Because the module will be accessible online and self-paced, it will allow students to engage with the content flexibly without requiring additional classroom time or institutional resources. The module could also be made available to English language learners beyond the original target audience at a later date.

Identification of the Problem

The learning opportunity addressed in this project involves increasing students' knowledge of regional cultural and linguistic variation within the United States. While students in Yulia's English courses demonstrate intermediate to upper-intermediate proficiency in English, they have limited exposure to the diversity of language use found in different parts of the United States. Most instruction has focused on standard forms of English used in academic settings rather than the regional expressions, vocabulary, and cultural influences that shape everyday communication.

As a result, students may encounter difficulties when interacting with native speakers from different regions or when interpreting informal language used in media, social networks, and personal communication. For example, learners may not recognize regionally specific vocabulary such as "y'all," "pop," or "bodega," nor understand the cultural contexts that gave rise to these expressions. Without this knowledge, learners may misinterpret meaning or miss important cultural references in conversation.

This project addresses an instructional opportunity to broaden students' cultural and linguistic awareness through targeted instruction. Rather than teaching new language skills, the course focuses on knowledge acquisition and cultural understanding, helping learners recognize how historical migration, cultural communities, and geographic factors have shaped language variation in the United States. The instructional solution will introduce students to key linguistic features associated with several U.S. regions and explore the cultural influences behind them.

Providing this type of instruction will enhance students' understanding of authentic English usage and improve their ability to interpret regional language

differences when communicating with native speakers or consuming English-language media.

Intended Audience

The intended audience for this instructional module consists of twenty undergraduate students enrolled in English courses at King Danylo University in Ukraine. The group includes eight philology students specializing in language studies and twelve students from other academic programs who are completing English as a general education requirement while pursuing majors in fields such as law, management, finance, hospitality, and marketing.

Several learner characteristics are relevant to the design of this instructional solution:

First, English proficiency levels range from B1 to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), with most students operating at the B2 level. Because learners possess intermediate to upper-intermediate proficiency, instructional materials can incorporate authentic examples of spoken language while still providing clear explanations of unfamiliar vocabulary. Activities should emphasize comprehension and cultural understanding rather than complex linguistic analysis.

Second, the learners are young adults between the ages of 18 and 21, which suggests a strong familiarity with digital technology and online learning environments. As a result, interactive multimedia elements such as videos, interactive maps, and short quizzes are likely to support engagement and motivation. Incorporating contemporary cultural references, such as social media or regional slang, may also increase relevance for this age group.

Third, students have limited direct experience with the United States, as none of the learners have visited the country. However, some students report having relatives or acquaintances living in cities such as New York or Boston. This connection suggests that learners may already possess curiosity about American culture and may benefit from instruction that links language variation to specific regions.

Finally, the class includes a gender distribution of four male students and sixteen female students, reflecting a relatively diverse classroom in terms of interests and

academic backgrounds. Although no students require special accommodations, instruction should remain accessible to all learners through clear explanations, visual supports, and structured interactive activities.

These learner characteristics suggest that an engaging, multimedia-based e-learning module emphasizing cultural exploration and language awareness will be an appropriate instructional approach.

Learning Context

The instructional solution will be delivered as a self-paced e-learning module accessible through the internet, allowing students to complete the lessons at any time and from any location. Students will be able to access the course from personal computers, tablets, or smartphones using a web browser.

Although the module may be introduced in a classroom setting by the instructor, the learning activities themselves are designed to be completed independently or collaboratively outside of class. The course will incorporate short videos, interactive H5P learning activities, and brief assessments embedded within the online environment.

The flexible online format supports the "anytime, anywhere" accessibility typical of modern e-learning environments. Students will be able to pause and revisit lessons as needed, allowing them to learn at their own pace. Because the course is web-based, it can also serve as a reusable instructional resource for future cohorts of students studying English.

Several resources support this learning context. Students already have regular access to internet-enabled devices and are accustomed to using online platforms for coursework and communication. Additionally, the instructor encourages students to use digital resources such as search engines or generative AI tools to support discussion and inquiry-based activities within the course.

Some constraints should also be considered. Internet connectivity may occasionally vary, so instructional materials should remain lightweight and accessible on multiple devices. Videos will therefore be kept relatively short, and interactive elements will emphasize clarity and usability rather than complex technical features.

Overall, the online learning environment provides a flexible and scalable solution that allows students to explore cultural and linguistic diversity in American English without requiring additional classroom time.

Description of the Proposed Solution

The proposed instructional solution is a self-paced e-learning module titled *English Across America: Culture and Language in U.S. Regions*. The module is designed to introduce students to cultural and linguistic variations in American English across different geographic regions of the United States. The course will begin with a short introductory video and interactive map that provide an overview of regional language variation and highlight how culture, history, and geography influence the way people speak. Following this introduction, learners will complete five short lessons, each focusing on a different region of the United States: the South, Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West Coast. The module will conclude with a brief video that synthesizes the key ideas of the course and emphasizes the connection between language, culture, and identity.

Each lesson will follow a consistent instructional structure. Lessons will begin with a short video introducing the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the region. Students will then explore examples of regional vocabulary and language features through interactive multimedia activities. After completing a brief knowledge check, students will participate in small-group discussion activities that encourage inquiry-based exploration of cultural topics related to the region. These discussions will allow learners to conduct short online investigations and share findings with classmates, helping them connect language features with historical and cultural influences. Each lesson will conclude with a short assessment aligned with the learning objectives.

The course emphasizes knowledge acquisition and cultural awareness rather than the development of new language skills. By exploring how geography, history, and cultural communities shape language use, students will develop a deeper understanding of how English varies across different parts of the United States.

The module will address the following learning objectives:

Course Learning Objective

By the end of this module, students will be able to recognize and interpret regional variations in American English by analyzing how historical, cultural, and social influences shape language use across different regions of the United States, enabling them to better understand authentic communication in real-world contexts.

Lesson Objectives

Lesson 1: The American South
Students will be able to identify at least three vocabulary items or expressions associated with the American South and explain the cultural or historical influences behind them.

Lesson 2: The Northeast
Students will be able to identify at least three vocabulary items or expressions associated with the Northeastern United States and explain how immigration and urban culture have influenced language in that region.

Lesson 3: The Midwest
Students will be able to identify at least three vocabulary items or expressions associated with the Midwestern United States and explain how regional culture and social norms are reflected in language use.

Lesson 4: The Southwest
Students will be able to identify at least three vocabulary items or expressions associated with the Southwestern United States and explain how Spanish and Indigenous cultural influences have shaped language in that region.

Lesson 5: The West Coast
Students will be able to identify at least three vocabulary items or expressions associated with the West Coast of the United States and explain how media, youth culture, and technological innovation influence language in that region.

Through these learning objectives, students will gain a deeper understanding of how language reflects cultural identity and historical experience. Increased awareness of regional variation in American English will help learners interpret authentic language encountered in conversations, media, and intercultural communication.

Project Timeline

The following timeline outlines the phases and tasks required to design, develop, and deliver the e-learning module *English Across America: Culture and Language in U.S. Regions* over the course of a seven-week development period.

Activity	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7
Analysis							
Task 1: Define instructional opportunity and project concept.	3-5						
Task 2: Meet with stakeholder (Yulia).	3-6						
Task 3: Conduct learner and context analysis.	3-6						
Task 4: Draft Needs Assessment document.		3-12					
Design							
Task 5: Finalize course goals and learning objectives.		3-12					
Task 6: Develop Design Blueprint.			3-22				
Task 7: Design user interface and navigation structure.			3-22				
Task 8: Create lesson storyboards.			3-22				
Task 9: Select multimedia and interactive activity formats.			3-22				
Development							
Task 10: Write scripts for introductory and regional lesson videos.				→	4-5		
Task 11: Record or produce introductory video explaining regional language variation.				→	4-5		
Task 12: Create lesson videos introducing the South, Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West Coast.				→	4-5		
Task 13: Produce concluding video summarizing language and cultural identity in the United States.				→	4-5		

Task 14: Create visuals, maps, and supporting graphics for lesson content.						4-12	
Task 15: Build interactive H5P activities for vocabulary exploration.						4-12	
Task 16: Develop audio or text examples demonstrating regional expressions.						4-12	
Task 17: Create inquiry-based discussion prompts for each lesson							4-17
Task 18: Develop formative knowledge checks for each lesson.							4-17
Task 19: Write assessment questions aligned with lesson objectives.							4-17
Task 20: Build quizzes and interactive assessments within the course platform.							4-17
Task 21: Integrate all multimedia elements into the course interface.							4-17
Task 22: Test lesson navigation and activity functionality.							4-18
Task 23: Revise content and interface elements based on usability testing.							4-19
Task 24: Finalize course structure and confirm alignment between objectives, activities, and assessments.							4-19
Implementation							
Task 25: Deliver completed e-learning module to instructor (Yulia).							4-19
Evaluation							
Task 26: Gather informal feedback from instructor (Yulia).							Later

Summary

The needs assessment identified a gap in students' awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity within American English. Although learners possess intermediate to upper-intermediate English proficiency, they have had limited exposure to the regional language variation that characterizes authentic communication in the United States.

The proposed solution – a self-paced e-learning module titled *English Across America: Culture and Language in U.S. Regions* – will address this gap by introducing learners to the cultural and historical influences behind regional language differences. Through multimedia instruction, interactive exploration, and guided discussions,

students will develop greater cultural awareness and improve their ability to interpret regional language variation. Because the course is delivered in an online format, it will provide a flexible and reusable instructional resource that can be accessed at any time.

The next phase of the project will transition into the design and development of the instructional solution. During the design phase, the course structure, user interface, and lesson flow will be finalized, including storyboards for the introductory component, five regional lessons, and concluding segment. Interactive learning activities, multimedia elements, and assessments aligned with the course and lesson objectives will also be planned.

Following the design phase, the majority of the project timeline will focus on developing the instructional materials, including scripting and producing lesson videos, creating visuals and maps, building interactive H5P learning activities, and developing formative assessments for each lesson. These components will be integrated into the course interface and tested to ensure that navigation and interactive elements function smoothly across devices. Once development is complete, the finished module will be delivered to the instructor for implementation with students, and informal feedback will be gathered to identify potential improvements for future iterations of the course.