Requirements

We Alredy have a website speakeazi.com in Wordpress and it has also woo-commerce incorporated. We are changing the whole concept of how we were doing the online English business before. We have created 15 English conversations to help students learn how to speak English.

We are thinking of basing the mainline of the website around conversations such as we already have. We envisage a menu item “Conversations”. This would lead to a list of the available conversations with their titles. We have for example “A Trip to London”, “Buying a car”. Each conversation is scripted for two people.

When a student selects a conversation he will see

- The conversation in text form

- An option to play an audio of the script, recorded by actors

The text of the script will be highlighted at every phrasal verb, idiom or slang. This indicates to the student that there will be a mini-lesson for that item.

Associated with the conversation there may be a quiz to check the student’s comprehension. Not sure about this yet, but Moodle can certainly handle it.

Associated with the conversation will be the 50+ mini-lessons that will describe the idioms etc.

Each mini-lesson will have the lesson itself, quite short.

For example, the mini-lesson for “donkey’s years’ would be:

“The idiom ‘donkey’s years’ means ‘a long time’. ‘It’s been donkey’s years since I’ve spoken with John, I’ll give him a call.’”

Then there will be a quiz, maybe multiple choice, maybe fill-in-the-blank, whatever.

We also envisage having each lesson, its quiz question/s and answer/s recorded so the student can hear the English being spoken, and click to hear as s/he follows the text of the lesson and quiz.

So far, so standard. In addition we have the following requirements:

- There should be the option to vary the speed of each audio clip. That can be done by providing, say, two separate playbacks – one at normal speed and one slowed down – no problem. But to avoid having to produce two audios for each audio clip it would be nice if somehow we provided just one clip and the website allowed a speed variation

- Requirement (nice to have): Would it be possible from within the conversation text to have links to the associated mini-lesson? For example, in the text, the words “donkey’s years” will be highlighted to indicate that there is a mini-lesson for it, but can we jump to the mini-lesson by a click on “donkey’s years”?

- Every audio clip should have the option for the student to speak and have his/her voice matched with the audio clip, with feedback about how well the student did. It seems that speechace can do this. Not sure how this can be incorporated. When we say “every audio clip” – well, that would not include the uninterrupted 1,000-word script as read by the actors. However, we envisage that the 1,000-word text and acted audio could be split by each actor’s lines. The point being that the student may wish to re-hear a particular section, and by splitting the script into small sections the student can easily find the right place. And each of these small pieces could? should? have the speechace voice checking option. This may be OK for shorter sentences, but not for longer ones. We know how to split the text and audio into small pieces, it’s the voice recognition we need help with.

Also…

We envisage other menu options “Idioms”, “Phrasal verbs”, “Slang”. These would reveal a simple list of all the items of that type that have been used in the Conversation courses, and a click on an item in the list (e.g. “donkey’s years”) will take the student into that item’s mini-lesson. Another option on a click would be to take the student into the conversation/s where that item is used. Possible?

Therefore the mini-lesson for “donkey’s years” needs to be accessed from two places – in the list of idioms, and as one of the mini-lessons for the conversation/s in which the idiom “donkey’s years” appears. As far as we understand Moodle, the only way to do this is to have two copies of the lesson. Is there a way to have just one copy and link to it from more than one place? The benefit is maintenance – if the lesson changes then it only needs to be changed in one place, and there’s no need to keep a catalogue of where a lesson is used (but is there a “search” option in Moodle that could find e.g. copies of the mini-lesson “donkey’s years”?)

3. Student tracking

This training programme is not progressive – we don’t start with easy stuff and progress. It is a candy store, and students can dip in wherever they like. From a student’s point of view, we guess that s/he may want to review the conversations and mini-lessons s/he’s viewed, and his/her quiz scores. We envisage that all quizzes will always be open for re-taking.

From a management information point of view, we would like to know a few stats: how many students, how many active, what mini-lessons are popular, what mini-lessons have low scores and therefore probably need review… What management information is available from Moodle as standard?

4. Control of student access.

We are considering a range of sign-up options:

- Access but without speech recognition/feedback

- Access with speech recognition and automated feedback (e.g. speechace)

- Access with speech recording and feedback provided (offline) by a teacher

If we went down that route, can Moodle allow access to these options according to the student’s subscription class? (We can see that this could be achieved by triplicating the lessons and removing speech recognition from one version, but ugh. So is there some way of controlling that within a mini-lesson, say?)

Another option might be for the student to pay $49, say, for access to up to 50 mini-lessons. How could that sort of option be handled?

5. The course expects that students will have a reasonable knowledge of English. We require students to understand most of the English used (except for the unfamiliar idioms etc.) So we have prepared a list of the most-used 4,000 English words. We can easily prepare a quiz on a random selection of 40 words so a student can check his/her level of knowledge. If a quiz score is less than 70% (say) then we will advise the student not to proceed. (Just advice, not a hard block.)

Zain already has a website and it would be ideal if this quiz could be incorporated into his main website, because that is where the infrastructure exists for a student to make payments. Then there would be a separate website for the course itself. We are sure that Moodle can be integrated within a website, but would there be any problem with Zain having two Moodles – one for the vocab test on his existing website, and a standalone instance for the courses themselves? But if we had subscription payments on one website and the actual courses on another, how could we control access to the courses depending on what subscriptions have been made?

6. The website should be “attractive”, not dull and “teacherly”.

7. We have used Moodle’s free option to create a prototype website: kosetrial.moodlecloud.com. Username “admin”, password “keithzain”. We would welcome feedback and suggestions. The course doesn’t include speech recognition because we don’t know how to do it.

8. Advice about back-up and recovery of the website – not only the fairly static elements of the courses themselves, but also the ever-changing student history and tracking.

9. We welcome feedback on our requirements: what can be done with standard Moodle features, what is practical, what would need heavy customisation. Or any other possibilities that could achieve the same goal.