

Prodigy (working title)

Prodigy is an online massive multiplayer game designed young to motivate young students of second languages. This is a tool for teachers for presenting content in a fun and creative way.

Intro

Say you are a student of psychology (in the real world) and, while it's nothing to be ashamed of, your English is, less than perfect. So, like the brave do, you decide to enroll to some public English school. In that school, you learn. Or at least you're supposed to. How do you learn? Depends on you. How are you taught or guided? That depends on the methodology the school follows, but no less important are the people around you – friends and teachers.

You've been there for quite some time and made little progress (which is perfectly fine). One day you come across a fellow student. You remember to things about her: she used to be much heavier than she is now, and her English was extremely poor. You chat for a while, and then you notice she's not to bad (as far as her English goes). You immediately stop her mid speech, and ask:

"What's your secret?"

"I just practice" she replies.

Now it hits you (you're a fast learner...), practice is key. You have hardly done any sort of practical exercises. They are an absolute pain the butt (you say to yourself). Well good news, you're not alone. And don't beat yourself up about it; most of them are not very fun. And yes, practice absolutely should be.

So why do most practical exercises share this boring nature? One answer – unimaginative content creators. The first common trade great activities share is that they are centered on one main subject learned. Students need to know what it is they are practicing – ambiguity is horrible. The second is presentation. Both are at full control by the teacher. While the subject might be dangerously boring (grammar rules...), it certainly doesn't have to be presented as such.

Vision

This is where the idea of Prodigy comes from. Presenting practical content for students of a second language to practice in a unique environment, separating between content and presentation. Content is controlled by teachers, and until machines speak our language it will always be the case.

An online environment where students practice and learn, engulfed by a story of a young Prodigy on his quest to conquer a field of interest. This is what prodigy is all about. Making study and practice fun. Imagine a virtual universe of many different schools, each focused on some field or skill, not necessarily languages, where players hangout out, learn and solve problems.

Use Prodigy as an in class activity, as presentation of HW, or as an online school. Give students feedback, in real time, create engaging content and activities and put a smile on their faces.

We believe that such an environment will encourage students to learn, even if what they learn is no fun, make a game out of it, do it well, and they shall be exposed to it more. Especially in the first steps one takes learning a new subject, field or skill, first impression is crucial, and determines the rest of their progress.

No such tool exists in the market today.

The Game of Prodigy (with examples)

Prodigy is set around the concept of Role Playing Games. A character is a student, the world is the school, and progression is made through accomplishing exercises. Gameplay is centered on different exercise templates, each having unique flavor. As an example, exercises where a student is required to *fill-in the blanks*, are represented as a unique mini game, reappearing in the context of different lessons.

Assume you are the same made up psychology student self from before, and that the actual school where you learn English, used the Prodigy system to create a virtual practical school, designed for its students for the sole purpose of practice. They named it – *Connoisseurs of English*.

As a new comer to the *Connoisseurs of English* school, you are assigned a **Quest** by the headmaster. The Quest (or syllabus) determines the level you will reach once you have accomplished all tasks assigned to you. Your curriculum is made of a sequence of lessons and validation points – quiz, test etc. It is called *EnglishGoverner*, and is designed to bring a student of elementary level to an intermediate one. Levels are individually defined by schools, and have no impact on the rules of the game. Levels are only terms schools assign to levels of difficulty or progression (should they choose to differentiate students by such).

Your first **Stage** in the curriculum is made of 3 lessons, and one validation point. It is called *Familiar Grounds*, and is made of three **Zones** representing the three subjects learned – Animals, Numbers and People.

Let's start with Numbers, should be simple enough. You enter the Numbers Zone. A zone is analogous to a classroom. Teachers and students may be present, some conversing between themselves, others solve some exercises, together or alone. In a zone you are assigned **Missions** you must complete. Completion of all missions opens up the portal to another zone. They are an assortment of **Obstacles** (questions) you must answer correctly, and are the minimal requirements a student must practice in a zone.

Your first Mission is an easy one: *"to count, or not to count?"* and it presents the player with a series of Yes/No questions, with Yes meaning *"to count"*. *"Upon completion you shall receive the following items: Reveal, Flashback"*. Wait what? *"Reveal shows the answer to any obstacle you may encounter. Flashback allows you to return and redo an obstacle during a mission. Use them wisely, as some obstacles prove more challenging than others..."*

Missions are exercises, and provide rewards upon completion. They give instructions, and share a unique format. They define the requirements teachers see as minimal to reach a fair level of perception in a subject/lesson. Bonus missions may be supplied to inform a player of content regarded as advanced.

In addition to Missions are **Challenges**. They are open text activities that must be submitted for examination by the creating teacher. They have their own XP scheme.

Side Note: we shall be concerning ourselves with a small set of such missions, each representing an exercise template (fill-in the blanks, yes/no etc.). At first only closed answer exercises are to be implemented. At a later date, additional types of missions shall be included. Challenges shall not be implemented at this current stage, but are considered throughout development.

More Points Please!

Teachers in our school define the thresholds students must pass in order to progress to another zone. This is done using the familiar Experience Points scheme commonly found in RPGs. XPs are granted to a student with every Obstacle he conquers. XPs are always added, never subtracted. This rewarding scheme is crucial to keeping players interested.

The XP scheme is static across any school, lesson and syllabus. Different types of Obstacles may be assigned a different XP scheme, related to the difficulty of the current TYPE of exercise, and not the content. Defining content by levels of difficulty is very abstract and subject to different interpretations by different people. Due to this fact, the progression scheme must be set by the Game rules.

An important feature is the inclusion of items or powers one may acquire during game play. These magical items are special Cheat Tricks one can use. They may help one complete an obstacle or mission, or used as a weapon against other players during a match.

The Group

Prodigy is about the individual, fore and foremost.

We do believe however, that some competitiveness may prove helpful. This is accomplished through Group Vs Group play. When one is at a zone, he is actually inside a virtual classroom, able to communicate and view all characters currently in the same zone. From this point, one may through the glove, and challenge others to a **Rumble**. Players are notified of such an event, and may choose to join. It is limited by max number of concurrent players, and several instances of a Rumble with different players may exist concurrently. In one, groups compete with each other over the highest possible score in a series of Obstacles.

The Teacher

Teachers are characters in Prodigy. They are present in the Zones (virtual classrooms) and are available for students at any time. They may participate in games with students, and add content on the fly whenever they please.

Beyond gameplay, teachers follow up on students through the progression of their characters. They may see Obstacles students have had a hard time solving, and gather knowledge of the class as a whole. This is useful beyond comprehension, and eases the work one must usually take to accomplish this.

Teachers are also given a service where exercises may be stored, sorted and fetched at will. They may gain insight on the popularity of some exercises, and improve themselves constantly. This is an extremely powerful tool, usually requesting one to manage all data on his/her own.