[研究論文]

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Researching Online Course Design for Content Learning and English Skills Development: A Moodle Course for the Community

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Recently, professors at the University of Shimane Junior College (USJC), Matsue Campus are creating courses for members of the community to study various topics as part of the "Educational Certificate Program."[1] For some of the courses in the program, course content and activities will be offered in online courses made with the open-source learning management software called Moodle. Online courses are especially appealing for members of the community whose time constraints or location don't allow for attending courses on campus. These courses can provide an important educational service to the community.

This paper will describe aspects of designing a Moodle course in the context of an English course on traditional Japanese crafts that the author is making. I will introduce various online tools that can be used with Moodle to promote learning and describe effective ways to use these tools. The course I'm designing will have the dual purposes of promoting practical English skill development and acquiring content knowledge about various local traditional crafts. Specifically, the course aims to help learners describe and promote traditional Japanese crafts in spoken and written English to foreign tourists or other English-speakers living in the community.

The course will be divided by topic with each topic focused on a different traditional Japanese craft; such as rattan cane weaving, Yasugi loom weaving, *washi temari* decorative balls, and *matcha* and *wagashi* making. Each topic in the course will begin with an introductory video about the craft with questions to generate interest. Next, vocabulary words and English definition matching activities will be used to present some key vocabulary that learners will need for the subsequent reading passages. At

least two reading passages will be used to provide models for the learners of how to describe and promote the craft being taught. The first passage will be graded to make the reading task easier for the learner and the second will use a more difficult, authentic text. Following the reading passages will be comprehension questions and an opportunity to discuss the passages in writing forums with others taking the course.

Also, there will be listening activities which use online videos or audio for listening practice. For example, learners taking the course can do partial dictation activities for a video on a traditional craft to sharpen their listening skills. Learners will submit written assignments such as describing or promoting a traditional Japanese craft of their choice, exploring ways to adapt traditional crafts to modern lifestyles, or comparing traditional Japanese crafts with similar crafts in other countries. Feedback from the instructor will help learners to further develop their writing. Those taking the course can also do regular timed writings to help improve fluency for writing and speaking in English. Learners will be able to submit presentations that have been made by uploading

images and recording the learner's voice giving the presentation. These presentations as well as the writing assignments will be made available for all of the learners on the course to review and comment on. In this way, the instructor hopes to create a supportive learning community for developing English skills in the context of traditional Japanese crafts. A variety of online tools are necessary to facilitate skill development through the tasks included in the course. The following sections will introduce these online tools and briefly explain how they are to be used in the course.

As mentioned earlier, learners can develop their listening skills and knowledge of traditional Japanese crafts by watching authentic video content on websites such as Youtube. There are many informative videos about popular tourist destinations in Japan including Matsue. Tourism organizations, tourist guide publishers and private individuals have contributed these English videos to describe and promote locations and notable cultural traditions around Japan. For example, a video on Youtube titled, "The Castle Town of Matsue: A Culture of Tea and *Wagashi*" introduces Matsue's tea culture in a way that is clear and easy to understand. Videos
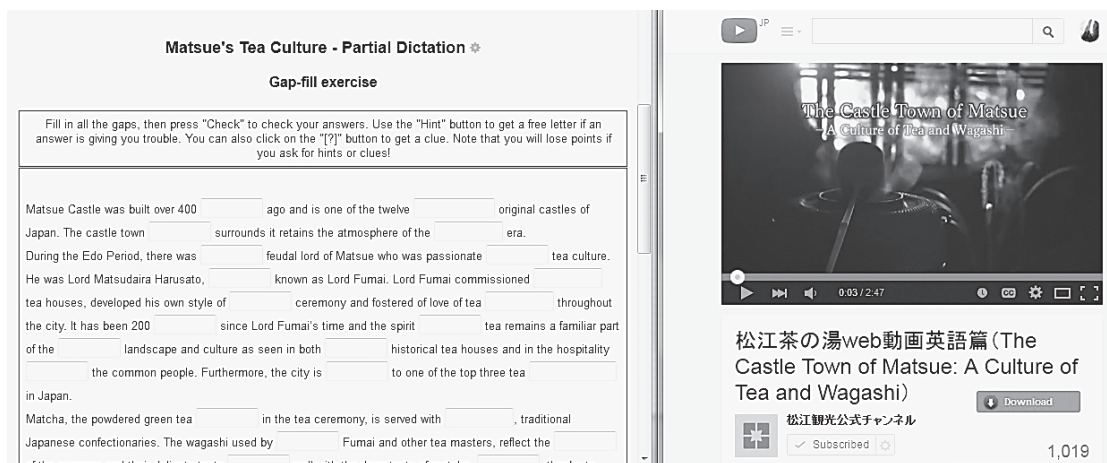

Fig. 1 Partial Dictation Listening Activity with Youtube
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHRsekvSey0)

like this one which describe local, traditional culture and crafts clearly in English are quite useful for listening practice in the Moodle course I'm designing (Fig. 1). Generally, the learner will watch the video and do a partial dictation activity, filling in missing words from a transcription of the video script. Partial dictation is a useful way to focus the learner's attention on key vocabulary and phrases without the challenging task of recording every word they hear.

Partial dictation activities can be made quite easily on Moodle with the freely downloadable software package, Hot Potatoes[2]. Using the JCloze tool within Hot Potatoes, you simply paste the transcribed text into the program and then select the words that you want to omit for the learner to fill-in. These will become the gaps in the partial dictation output file. In the dropdown list of activities on the main Moodle course page, there is a choice named "HotPot". This selection will allow you to upload your Hot Potatoes file to your course. Learners then just open the video and partial dictation activity and try to fill in the missing words. They can of course pause and repeat the video until they can identify all of the unknown words. For the words that the learner just can't recognize, Hot Potatoes has a "hint" button that the learner can click to get the first letter of the missing word. By clicking the hint button again the next letter of the missing word is given. This is a nice feature to help learners avoid getting stuck on an unknown word. Each time the hint button is used or a wrong answer is given, the score for the activity is reduced.

Vocabulary learning is an important aspect of any course designed to improve practical language skills. In this course which teaches about various traditional crafts, the vocabulary is varied and often specialized. For example, special words for raw materials, tools or techniques are sometimes needed to properly describe crafts. In this online course learners can access teacher-created vocabulary sets for study on Memrise.com[3]. This website automatically creates a variety of vocabulary quizzes and games with the words in the set to help with memorization. Memrise.com uses a spaced-repetition system to optimize memorization by quizzing words before they are likely to be forgotten. This website also has convenient multimedia options which allow the teacher to add images and audio for better learning.

Fig. 2 Video Concordancer on EnglishCentral.com

One of the drawbacks is that it requires a free registration to use this website. Registration is quick and easy but the learner will need to give some basic personal information and an email address. This may be a confusing point for some learners, so in the orientation to the course I will have detailed information on how to register for the websites I am planning on using to supplement the course. All of the online tools and websites will be free to use.

Another website which is useful for vocabulary learning is EnglishCentral.com[4]. This one also requires a free registration but it isn't necessary to create a set of vocabulary words like on Memrise.com. EnglishCentral.com is especially useful because it has a Video Concordancer tool that gives the learner a number of instances of how a particular word is used by native speakers. For example, searching for the word "seasonal" returns 10 clips of different video segments in which that word was used (Fig. 2). The learner can watch these clips to see how the word is used in a number of authentic examples.

This helps them to use new vocabulary naturally by showing many patterns of correct usage. Learners often assume they know a word if they know its definition, but the ability to use a new word naturally needs to be emphasized. This Video Concordancer tool at EnglishCentral.com is an effective way to learn natural usage for English words from videos of native speaker examples.

The next online tool I'd like to present is called VoiceThread.com[5] and it is a website for making and sharing online presentations. A Voicethread presentation contains pictures that you upload along with a recording of your voice (Fig. 3). Also, you can mark on the images with a pen as you talk to better illustrate your message. Other registered voicethread users can be allowed to add their text or audio comments to presentations so the learner can get feedback from the instructor and others.

Learners will be asked to use this resource to make original presentations on traditional crafts and culture for course assignments. The link to the Voicethread presentation is submitted to the Moodle course and others enrolled in the course can access the presentation and give their feedback as well. With a free account, learners can create

up to three voicethread presentations. Voicethread.com allows users to comment on each other's presentations giving learners more

Fig. 3 VoiceThread Presentation

opportunities for interaction and communication in English.

This online course I'm designing will have readings for each topic to provide information on the traditional craft being taught, introduce important vocabulary and provide a general model for describing and promoting traditional Japanese crafts in English. In order to promote comprehension of more difficult texts the vocabulary of authentic texts may need to be adjusted to fit the English level of the learners.

An online tool called the Online Graded Text Editor[6] can be used to identify words that are likely to be unknown to learners based on their vocabulary knowledge (Fig. 4). For example, first-year students at the USJC Matsue campus generally average 60-70% correct at the 2,000-3,000 word levels on Nation and Beglar's (2007) Vocabulary Size Test. This means that students know the meanings of 60-70% of the the first 3,000 most frequently used English words. With this knowledge, I can use the Online Graded Text Editor to help me adjust the words

used in a text to roughly match the students' lexicons.

To use this website, you simply paste the reading text into the window on the main page and select the appropriate vocabulary levels for your students. You set the vocabulary level parameters by selecting a word frequency list such as the New General Service List (New GSL) and a word frequency level. The New GSL, by Browne, C., Culligan, B. & Phillips, J. (2013), is a list of 2,802 words that account for over 90% of the vocabulary in general English texts. It was created to help English learners identify and learn the most frequently occurring vocabulary in English texts. After the frequency parameters for the vocabulary have been set, the Online Graded Text Editor website will analyze the text and indicate the low-frequency words occurring in the text that students will be less likely to understand. Then, I can substitute the difficult, low-frequency words for more frequently-used vocabulary or keep those words in the text and focus on teaching them as part of
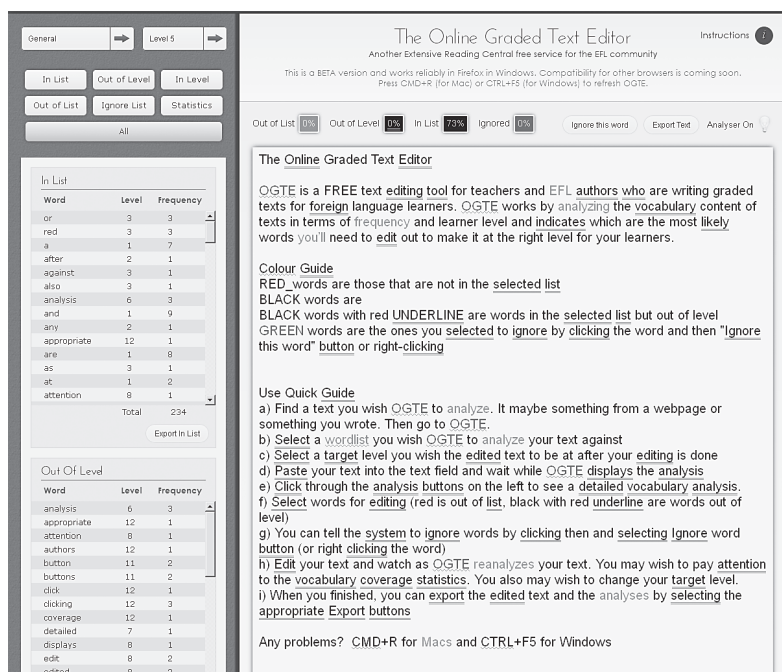

Fig. 4 The Online Graded Text Editor

the lesson.

Another tool that can assist learners with reading is Popjisyo.com[7]. This website provides quick pop-up definitions in Japanese for English words in online texts. You just enter an English text or an English URL on Popjisyo.com and the website will provide an identical webpage in which Japanese definitions will appear when the cursor is moved over an English word in the text. Using Popjisyo should greatly improve the speed and readability of authentic texts for the learners. You can quickly get a definition and know the gist of an unknown word by scrolling over it. However, as with any dictionary, the learners need to pay close attention to the context and usage of the unknown words to determine which definition is correct.

Fluency development is an often overlooked skill that deserves more attention in English skills courses. Encouraging learners to develop fluency gives them practice using English to communicate real messages quickly and effectively. This online course will include reading and writing fluency development activities based on Nation's (2009) four conditions for fluency development: (a) learner's should be focused on the message, (b) the materials should be easy, (c) there should be pressure to perform at a faster-than-normal speed and (d) there are many opportunities for practice. For example, in the writing fluency activities I'll provide regular timed freewriting practice on each topic. Using an online text assignment window in Moodle with a link to an online countdown timer, learners try to type as much as possible on a topic for ten minutes. After automatically counting the number of words written they will update a graph on the Moodle course website to measure their writing fluency progress. In addition to freewriting, other forms of writing will be offered on this Moodle course. Each topic will have a forum where the learners and I can ask questions, post comments and freely interact with each other.

This paper introduced some online tools that can be used to support English skill development and learning about local traditional Japanese crafts for people in the community. These tools make it possible to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through an online Moodle course which is available anytime to the learner. People in the community can use the course to improve their English skills and learn how to promote and describe traditional Japanese crafts in English. I hope to keep adding new topic units on various traditional crafts so that those who participate in the course can hopefully continue to learn and support each other as an online community of English learners.

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