

Wikiotics: The Interactive Language Instruction Wiki

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ABSTRACT

While most existing wiki systems are geared toward editing text documents, we have built Wikiotics to enable the collaborative creation of interactive multimedia materials most needed in language instruction. In our demonstration, we will show several types of interactive lessons that can be created from simple multimedia elements. We will also show the lesson creation/editing interfaces and how our smart phone app can simplify the process of capturing local media and integrating that new media into existing lessons.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3.1 [Computer Uses in Education]: [Collaborative learning]

Keywords

Wiki, Language education, Structured wiki, Collaborative authorship, Interactive media, Wikiotics, Ductus

1. INTRODUCTION

Wikiotics¹ is a web application where language instructors and students can collaboratively build interactive language instruction materials. It aims to expand upon the traditional idea of a wiki, empowering users by allowing them to contribute fully interactive content in addition to traditional, text-based content.

When we first formulated the project, we evaluated several popular wiki engines in an attempt to find appropriate software to power the site. We found that each software package we considered had two main limitations that made them unacceptable for our use case:

- Most wikis are meant to edit text-based wiki pages, with images and audio floated to the sides. By contrast, language lessons work best when they are fully

interactive. It is also important that users be able to edit the lessons through a graphical user interface, without needing to learn a complicated templating syntax.

- Most wiki engines assume a consensus model; that is, they are meant for work-flows in which people edit a page about a given topic until it is complete and up to date, and any undesirable edits are reverted. By contrast, language learning materials work best when people are encouraged to copy, move and fork lessons, all while retaining full revision history. In practice, this allows a teacher to customize a lesson for her own students without forcing the changes on everyone else, or for somebody to take e.g. an English lesson and replace the phrases with Spanish ones, thus creating a lesson in a new language.

To address these issues, we have developed a new wiki engine called Ductus,² which powers Wikiotics and is available as free software. It is designed in a generic way, such that it can be adapted to other situations in which structured, interactive wiki pages would be useful.

2. DEMONSTRATION

We plan to give a brief introduction to Wikiotics and to show a live overview of the site. After demonstrating a few different interactive lesson types, we will show how to create, edit and fork a language lesson. We will also show how our smart phone app can be used to gather pictures and audio for integration into language lessons on the site.

We solicit and appreciate peer feedback on the mechanisms we are using to adapt the wiki model to these novel conditions, and we hope to discuss which applications, besides language instruction, could benefit from using the structured wiki approach we have adopted with Ductus.

¹<http://wikiotics.org/>

²<http://ductus.us/>