Quia

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Product at a glance

www.quia.com

Quia is pronounced *key-ah.* Quia stands for "Quintessential Instructional Archive".

Product type
Online educational tool that allows teachers to
* create and administer online quizzes
* create and administer online surveys
* create and share online learning activities
* create and maintain an online calendar
* maintain a class grade book and generate student reports

Language
* English interface
* supports activities in over thirty languages including Asian languages and many European languages

Hardware and software requirements
* computer with Windows 98 – Vista, or Mac OS 9 or 10
* computer with Java installed
* Web browser: latest available version of Internet Explorer, Safari, or Firefox recommended
* Internet connection

Price
* Annual subscription: $49.00
* 30-day free trail available
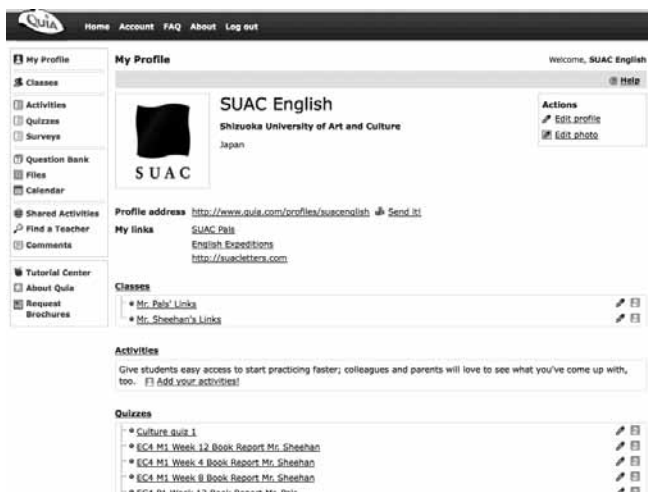* Some activities are accessible without a subscription

Review

Figure 1. Quia home

Introduction

Started in 1998 when integrative Computer Assisted Language Learning (**CALL**) and technological advancements had begun to equip educators with more options in the field of **CALL**, Quia (*key-ah)* is an established educational tool that provides teachers and students with an extensive array of functions and materials to aid in the implementation of education-related online activities. Quia can meet the needs of instructors interested in blended learning, which, according to Motteram & Sharma (2009), is "the most appropriate solution for teachers working in traditional classrooms who want to make use of digital technologies" (p. 83). Continuing technological progress has resulted in greater access to resources for learners and teachers in all areas of education. Nonetheless, this improved access comes with caveats. If instructors are going to make "**CALL** software a participant in **L2** tasks" (Chapelle, 1998, p. 26), choosing the right tool to provide learners with linguistic input is essential. An online quiz and activity creation program can help teachers create exercises that have a number of features lacking in traditional paper-based learning. Quia can help **CALL** practitioners build exercises with features that make linguistic "input enhancement" (Chapelle, 2003, p. 41) possible. Quia houses not only tools for language study, but also carries materials on a number of other subjects; however, those features are beyond the purview of this article. This software review will focus on the elements of Quia that are pertinent to language instructors interested in computer assisted language learning and the integration of technology into a curriculum. Quia may be of greatest benefit to instructors interested in supplementing traditional courses with online content.

With the increase of online tools on the market, there are a number of alternatives to Quia; some of the programs are open source, others are either free or require a subscription fee. For teachers with more technical ability and administrative support, Moodle may be an option to consider for managing courses and providing online content; a course management system such as Blackboard can also give teachers more choices when creating an

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online presence for their students. Nonetheless, the learning curve for Moodle is steeper than that for Quia; furthermore, instructors with limited budgets may find the costs of Blackboard prohibitive. For those interested in conducting online surveys, a program like Survey Monkey has a free basic plan; however, this option has its limitations. Surveys are restricted to only 100 responses; Survey Monkey basic allows up to ten questions per survey.

Quia may be the preferred option for instructors who would like to conduct larger surveys, give in-class or out-of-class online quizzes, and provide online activities and exercises to their students for a reasonable subscription fee and minimal technical know-how.

This review will highlight key components of Quia such as the quiz and survey functions; it will then introduce the types of activities that can be created using the program and shared with subscribers. The review will conclude by introducing some practical applications of Quia-created content that the author has successfully used in his university courses; screen shots from areas of the author's account will be provided to complement the written descriptions of features. Figure 1 shows a Quia profile page that is the base of operations for all Quia functions. The menu on the left allows easy access to all areas of Quia.

Quia Classes

Quia has a function that allows instructors to create individual classes. Each class is given a class page and a URL; links to quizzes, surveys, or activities are displayed at the bottom of each class page. After an activity is created, the option to link that material to a particular page will appear. It is not necessary to create a class roster to administer quizzes or surveys. If a class is not enrolled, quizzes can be given by requiring students to input their name and ID number; the secret word option allows even greater security for quiz administration. Unfortunately, while Quia has a number of excellent features, one shortfall is in the class enrollment process. Quia does not have the ability to import Excel files to enroll classes. However, recent improvements now allow teachers to import .txt files and .csv files. Clear instructions have made this option more appealing than either manually enrolling students or having students enroll themselves should a class roster be preferred. Once the class page is created, messages, a calendar, and images can be included on the page. Online resources can also be linked to the Quia class page by pasting a URL in the "Useful links" section. If an instructor has a course website, a link can be provided to that; furthermore, if an instructor wants students to access other online resources, for example, Podomatic, the URL can be embedded in the class page. The class page can be used as a base to access all course-related content. See Figure 2 for an example of a class page created by the author that includes links to online surveys and an online resource.

Quizzes

Web-based assessment has a number of advantages and has been received favorably by students and instructors in a variety of fields (DeSouza & Fleming, 2003). The Quia quiz manager has quite a few functions that enable instructors to get the most out of online assessment. As with all materials on Quia, there is a bank of content that can be shared, copied, and adapted for a particular course. Instructors who require original quizzes can create them in minutes. The question types include multiple choice, fill-in, essay, matching, and pop-up; the options are adequate enough to suit most assessment requirements. Quiz functions include question randomization, password protection, a quiz timer, and a quiz

Figure 2. Personalized Quia class page

expiration tool that prevents student access after a set date and time. All quizzes provide the instructor with a link that can be embedded in an external website, emailed, or linked to from a Quia class page. Figure 3 is a screen shot of the Quia quiz creator displaying types of question formats. Quizzes can be created by copying and pasting from a Word or text file and assigning features such as question randomization, answer feedback, point values, and single question access or whole quiz access. An additional feature of the quiz tool is the ability to include an image, an audio clip, or a video file to accompany text questions; this option certainly encourages more teacher innovation than paper-based assessment instruments. However, this function is not without its flaws. To use images, all files must first be uploaded to a files folder within Quia. Once the files are in the folder, they then can be uploaded to quizzes or class pages. Users are not able to upload a file to a quiz or class page directly from their computer; an extra step is required. For instructors interested in using audio or video files, this function can prove to be less than ideal. In quizzes that include audio or video, a new window is opened upon accessing the file. Students are taken away from the main quiz page. This step prevents users from viewing the text and controlling the audio or video simultaneously; such a limitation will certainly make cloze activities frustrating and challenging to students. Until this function is improved, quizzes with images and text only may the preferred choice of many instructors.

After quizzes have been administered, a count of completed quizzes is given on the user-friendly grading workbench. Quiz results can be broken down by question, or by individual **48** student. An icon next to a student's name indicates when questions need to be graded; this

Figure 3. Quiz creator

message would occur for free response or short answer questions that require instructor review. All other question types are graded automatically. Quiz results can be archived on Quia, or exported as an Excel file. Furthermore, if students have been enrolled in a class, quiz scores will be stored in a grade book that allows detailed reports to be generated by the instructor.

Surveys

The Quia survey tool functions in a similar fashion as the quiz tool. An added feature is the ability to customize the look of the survey. Survey background colors can be selected to blend into websites more easily. HTML mark-up can be enabled to add color and other features to questions. The anonymity function can be set to require names depending on instructor needs. Survey question options include rating, ranking, yes/no, multiple select, pop-up or free response. The stats display function allows the survey conductor to view question summaries, view results by individual respondent, or view individual question response details. The number of survey respondents is displayed along with percentages of results. Each question displays the results in a bar graph for ease of reference. All results can be either viewed in the Quia survey manager, or exported as an Excel file for other uses. Figure 4 shows a survey conducted by the author. The background color was set to match the tones of the website that linked to the survey; this allowed the survey to blend into the site. Figure 5 shows survey results from the stats page.

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Figure 4. Seamless survey distribution

Activities

There are sixteen types of activities that can be created with Quia. The list of topics in the shared activities bank is extensive and easy to access. There is also a function that allows users to view a list of the most popular shared activities from the previous month. Activities include word jumbles, battleship, flashcard games, and clozes. The activity creation templates make it easy for instructors to create their own unique materials. Hangman, matching, pop-ups, and challenge board templates can be used to create content to suit a particular topic, course, or vocabulary list. Word lists can be imported to make activity generation easier. Activities can be used for an individual class only, or they can be shared with subscribers and contributors across the globe. Quia reports that it is used by educators in over 12,000 schools in the USA and in 70 countries worldwide. As is the case with quizzes and surveys, once an activity is created, it is assigned a URL that can be linked to from a website, or it can also be added to a Quia class page. Figure 6 shows the activity creation interface. Icons identify the types of activities available. Statistics and a hit counter help track activity use by students. The materials can be organized into folders for easy access and management.
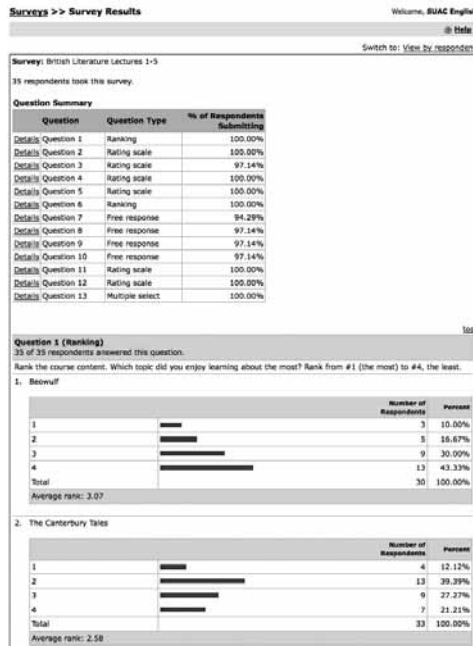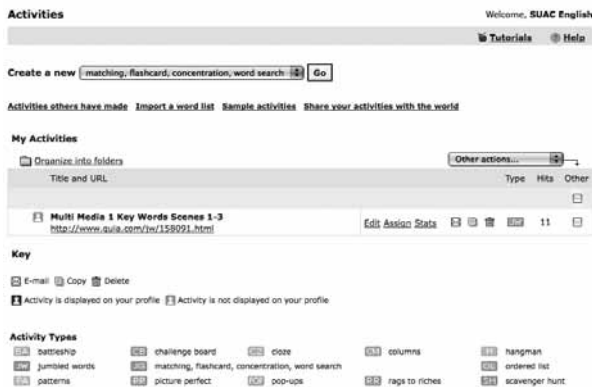
Figure 5. Survey results

Figure 6. Activity creation

Administrative Support

Both seasoned and novice CALL practitioners will find things they like about Quia. For instructors unfamiliar with technology, Quia's FAQs and Tutorial Center should assist them. There is also a technical support center that encourages comments and suggestions. For **51**

larger organizations or teams of educators, Quia can provide printed materials upon request; there is also a downloadable PowerPoint presentation that can be used to explain Quia information to colleagues or school administrators. The slide show has detailed information about Quia's functions and is a good starting point for individual instructors curious about the power of Quia. The instructions in the **FAQ** section run the spectrum of Quia features and are sufficiently detailed to allow even **CALL** newbies to be up and running in no time.

Practical Applications

The author of this review has been a Quia subscriber since 2007. Initially, Quia was enlisted by the author to quiz students in a Multi Media English course. The course was taught in a language lab, but had no online assessment instruments. Quia allowed the instructor to enroll classes, create quizzes and activities, and maintain class grade books. While this function alone may be sufficient for some educators, Quia users are encouraged to explore many of the other features of this useful tool. Surveys conducted in Quia make data gathering and management simple. The Quia survey function has been used by the author to conduct action research on students in a **CALL** classroom, and also assess comprehension and study habits for a group of literature students. In both instances, students were given access to online surveys via links from an external website. All data was collected and collated upon completion of the questions. The data was exported to Excel files and incorporated into presentations and journal articles.

Quia can be used in a variety of ways depending on the needs of the students and the goals of the teacher. Figure 7 shows an open-book sentence pattern quiz that was given to university students in an introductory reading and writing course. The purpose of this activity was to make sure students were familiar with the eight sentence patterns described on Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (**OWL**). After the quiz was created and color-coded using **HTML** mark-up, students were given access to the activity over a span of three weeks. They could use class notes and access **OWL** to check their answers. Students were given one hour to complete the quiz at any time, from any place, over a three-week period. This assignment implemented the task as homework and was not met with the negative reception that is often associated with traditional quizzes.

The flexibility of Quia allows instructors to set a time for a particular activity, as in the case of a quiz or homework assignment. Other activities can be left open to allow access at any time from any location. Figure 8 shows a screen shot of a reading comprehension activity that can be accessed from the reading center website at the author's university. The activities being created for the reading center are modeled on reading specialist Beatrice Mikulecky's reading strategy activities; a 1989 study by Mikulecky, Clark and Adams is cited in Chapelle, Jamieson & Park (1996), concluding that, "students needing reading remediation performed better in a computerized reading strategy group than remedial learners in a control group" (p. 36). These reading activities are open to all students and are designed to encourage learners to independently improve their reading skills. They are not connected to any particular course at the university and are intended to foster lifelong learning skills. Having materials accessible to all students at any time nudges them one step closer toward learner autonomy. The European Commission has proposed that "learners must become proactive and more autonomous, prepared to renew their knowledge continuously . . . the teacher's role becomes one of facilitation . . . support and guidance in the service of learners'

Figure 7. Sentence patterns homework quiz

own efforts to access, use and ultimately create knowledge" (as cited in Field, 2006, p. 150). The wide pallet of activities and easy access to them provided by Quia may enable instructors to help students take more control over their learning.

Quia activities can be used to supplement **CALL** course exercises; students can work in pairs or as individuals. The writing course sentence pattern quizzes were taken outside of the talk and chalk classroom to provide the instructor with the most efficient way to expose students to sentence patterns and give instant feedback to a large class. Used in this manner, Quia provided opportunities for a face-to-face plus online approach to blended learning, by acting as a instrument for "the delivery of parts of the course through distance tools" (Motteram & Sharma, 2009, p.90).

While individual uses of Quia can be left to the discretion of the instructor and school, it is encouraging to note that a **CALL** lab is not required to access the materials, nor is there a need to have a specific **CALL** course in a school's curriculum to expose students to tailor-made online materials. As mentioned above, one of the author's current projects includes the development of a variety of online exercises created to encourage independent study in an area of great weakness to many Japanese students: reading. With the new school year beginning, the exploration of new ways to use Quia will continue.

Reading Comprehension A (1-16)

A generic drug is a medication that is chemically equivalent to the brand-name drug for which it is a substitute. It is also a bioequivalent. Generic drugs must deliver the same amount of active ingredients into the patient 's bloodstream in the same amount of time, have the same therapeutic action of the brand-name drug, and must be approved by the FDA.

Generic drugs in general are less expensive, mostly because manufacturers of generic drugs do not have to repeat the extensive clinical trials that were used in developing the brand-name drug. Though the active ingredients are the same, the fillers and binders used in generic drugs usually differ from those in brand-name drugs, which can affect how quickly they are absorbed or can make them less potent. Some people are allergic to the binders and fillers used in the generic substitute.

When a drug is first placed on the market, usually it is patented for 17 years. That means no one can manufacture another drug with the same chemical formulation during those years. Only when the patent has expired can other pharmaceutical companies manufacture generic versions of brand-name drugs. For that reason, some drugs currently on the market do not have generic versions.

Certain generic medications may not work as well as the brand-name originals. Doctors generally advise patients to stick with brand names for drugs to control epilepsy, other seizure conditions, heart problems, and psychiatric conditions.

Source: Floyd, Patricia A., Mimms, Sandra E., and Yelding, Caroline. Personal Health, 3rd Edition, pages 498-499.

1. The main idea of this passage is (1 point)
   ○ the FDA is responsible for regulating generic drugs.
   ○ doctors do not prescribe generic drugs.
   ○ generic drugs are cheaper than brand-name drugs.
   ○ generic drugs can act as substitutes for brand-name drugs.

2. According to the passage, a patent for a new drug is valid for what period of time? (1 point)
   ○ 5 years
   ○ 15 years
   ○ 17 years
   ○ 9 years

3. The word bioequivalent in the first paragraph means (1 point)
   ○ recommended.
   ○ having an equal weight.
   ○ acting on the body in the same way.
   ○ restricted to use by biologists.

Figure 8. Reading exercises for the Reading Center

Conclusion

The number of teachers who have become more capable of integrating **CALL** in the language curriculum has increased greatly over the past few years; furthermore, the number of schools eager to serve their students by introducing technology into language lessons has been on the rise. As a result of these changes, a wide variety of online tools and software programs have become more readily available. Finding the right match between teacher and educational tool is no mean task. The financial resources of the school and the technical ability of teachers and staff must be factored into large-scale use of **CALL** materials at schools. An individual teacher or a whole school can use Quia. For instructors interested in web-based assessment tools and activities, Quia is an excellent place to start. Quia can allow teachers to take a step toward integrating online learning via the Internet. Quia's online quizzes provide instant feedback; online exercises can be designed to be fun and therefore, motivate learners to study independently. In this author's experience in particular, the sentence pattern quizzes helped students understand grammar and motivated them to engage more with the course content. Al-Jarf (2005) cites a similar experience, "where technology is available to **EFL** students and instructors, use of an online course from home as a supplement to in-class techniques helps motivate and enhance **EFL** students' learning and mastery of English grammar" (p. 166).

    The user-friendly interface and numerous functions for a small annual fee make Quia attractive. The simple subscription process and easy initial set-up allows instructors to

side step administrative delays to implementing technology that can be encountered at some schools. The $49.00 a year subscription fee is a reasonable price for a program with so many features. For instructors and students interested in evaluating Quia's resources, neither a trial, nor a subscription is required. The shared activities library can be accessed from the Quia home page. Figure 9 shows the type of activities and subjects offered. While space limitations prevent more detailed description of all of the aspects of this program, it is hoped that this review will raise awareness of the power of Quia. The fun happens when teachers explore and discover new ways to use educational tools. The thirty-day free trial offered by Quia will certainly give people a chance to do that and more.

Figure 9. Shared activities available to all

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