

Content-based instruction using Moodle: Teaching with TEDTalks

Rick Broadaway

Kanazawa Gakuin University
rick@kanazawa-gu.ac.jp

This paper will describe how Moodle was employed to facilitate the use of TEDTalks as content for an advanced EFL course in development. After a brief overview of content-based instruction (CBI) and issues of “suitability of content,” it will provide a rationale both for using the TEDTalks website and for using the Moodle software, and especially for their use in combination. The paper will provide practical advice on how to set up such a course, describing how the course was organized inside Moodle, how each Moodle feature was used, as well as how best to deploy Moodle to maximize a student-centered, collaborative learning experience. Forums, databases, glossaries, quizzes and workshops made up the core functionality of the course website and each was used for a variety of purposes. An appendix is also provided that shows a detailed 15-week course schedule.

Introduction

For better or worse, English has become the common language of the world for discussing global topics and issues, and conversely, for introducing local topics and issues to a global audience. However, it is often difficult for non-native English speakers to participate in this global conversation because their language training has tended to shelter them from the complexity of authentic discourse and focused their education more on the pedagogically manageable aspects of language and the study of “altered” (i.e. simplified) content – content that is often stripped of any engaging realism, human feel or immediate relevance. At the beginner and intermediate levels this is probably an understandable, and perhaps even

preferable, state of affairs. But at what point should the training wheels come off and students encouraged to join the exciting discourses in the larger world around them? This paper will describe a course for 4th-year university students in Japan, most of who desire to become English teachers. The aim of the course is to help students transition from a state where their habit is to study English as a language but talk about education in Japanese to a state where they use English to talk about education. In other words, the goal is to assist these Japanese students in acculturating to a new community of discourse, a global discourse in English on current issues in education. To this purpose, I decided to use the TEDTalks website, which organizes its video presentations by themes, as content for the course. I offered the students the opportunity to choose the videos they would like to watch and study from among 84 talks under the theme of "How We Learn." Then, I created a website in Moodle that leverages the power of a learning management system to help students make the leap to studying the more challenging content and to provide an environment for student-centered, collaborative learning.¹

What is content-based instruction?

The foundational concept for **CBI** is the notion of "comprehensible input" as formulated by Krashen (1981), who asserted that "acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." Since then, the emphasis on meaningful interaction has been moderated in light of studies by Swain (1985) and others that show the importance of "comprehensible output" acquired through the explicit instruction of language forms. However, **CBI** has continued to thrive. It has taken many different forms over the years. Stoller and Grabe (1997) listed eight distinct movements in a variety of different educational settings, such as English for Academic Purposes in universities, K-12 Immersion, and Whole Language Learning in elementary schools. Furthermore, **CBI** has flourished with the spread of the Internet and easily accessible content in the target language.

Suitable content for CBI?

What criteria, if any, should a teacher use when choosing suitable content for a curriculum? Early statements within the field are rather vague on this point. Leaver and Stryker (1989) say simply that a **CBI** curriculum "is appropriate to the needs of the students." Genesee (1994) suggests that content "...need not be academic; it can include any topic, theme, or non-language issue of interest or importance to the learners." Met (1991) proposes that "... 'content' in content-based programs represents material that is cognitively engaging and demanding for the learner, and is material that extends beyond the target language or target culture." Obviously, the question is complicated by the existence of a variety of factors, both linguistic and affective, that interact and sometimes counteract each other. A student with a keen interest in a particular topic may be able to overcome linguistic difficulty, while the same student may be bored with easier material on a topic that doesn't interest him. Similarly, a student with intense interest in a particular topic may be simply overwhelmed by even the slightest difficulty.

The question of what criteria a teacher should use can be circumvented to a certain degree by allowing the students to make their own informed choices about what to study.

The student-centered approach does not totally solve the problem, however, since the possibility exists that students may make bad choices or that they may have made a choice without sufficient options or information, but with the teacher's guidance students can learn to make better choices and become more self-sufficient language learners.

It is also important to consider that 'difficulty' and 'interest-level' may not be the overriding considerations. Students can become motivated to talk about any content if the discourse about that content is part of a socially rewarding experience and offers them the chance to be a part of a community, albeit a short-term speech community. Eskey (1997) explains:

...what we teach in any kind of content-based course is not the content itself but some form of the discourse of that content – not, for example, 'literature' itself (which can only be experienced) but how to analyze literature...for every body of content that we recognize as such – like the physical world or human cultural behavior – there is a discourse community – like physics or anthropology – which provides us with the means to analyze, talk about, and write about that content...Thus, for teachers the problem is how to acculturate students to the relevant discourse communities, and for students the problem is how to become acculturated to those communities.

For this reason, creating a good social environment (both in the online forums and in the classroom), where students can feel free and safe to use language playfully, creatively, humorously, erroneously, and even off-topic, is an important part of making the content "suitable."²

Rationale

The basis of my rationale is that both **TED**Talks and Moodle are high-quality, reliable, well-established institutions committed to the cause of making education available to everyone, and that they have a natural symbiosis, one as a content-provider and the other as a learning management system.³ Both technologies are well suited to fulfilling a fundamental pedagogical need for advanced students in Japan by making high-quality, thought-provoking, web-based content in authentic English accessible to learners in an environment that empowers student choice and participation as well as collaborative study.

*TED*Talks

TED is a private, non-profit organization founded in order to disseminate "ideas worth spreading."⁴ Since its inception over two decades ago, it has grown to become one of the most well-known venues for innovative and engaging presentations – presentations on topics that now extend far beyond the original three fields of Technology, Entertainment and Design. The videos are distributed under a Creative Commons license and are thus free for educators to use in their classes. The **TED** website has two features that make it particularly useful for language teaching: 1) an interactive transcript for each video in the original English (as well as many other languages, all translated by volunteers) with clickable phrases that allow students to jump directly to that particular phrase in the video, and 2) subtitles, which, in addition to being great language study support, can also help students to grasp the conceptual content of the presentations in order to participate in class activities.

Moodle

Moodle is an open-source learning management system (**LMS**) developed in Australia by Martin Dougiamas with portions contributed/copyrighted by many others around the world.⁵ It is used in a variety of settings: education, training and business. In terms of number of verified sites and registered users, it has grown, according to a study conducted by the Open University of Japan (2011), to be the number one **LMS** in use both in Japan and in the world at large. It is now a well-established e-learning platform with all of the features that one would expect of such a system: assignment and database submission, online quizzes, calendar, discussion forums, and many others.

Teaching TEDTalks using Moodle

If a teacher were to use only the **TED** website as course content – that is – if, in a more traditional fashion, he or she simply assigned a video as homework and then read and discussed the transcript in class with students while carrying out various classroom activities, then the course would, more likely than not, work perfectly fine. So, what is to be gained by using Moodle?⁶ Here are a few reasons:

1. **Simplified management saves time and enables greater complexity:** The management of learning tasks, student projects, assignments, etc. takes time. By simplifying these tasks, Moodle not only saves time but also enables the implementation of more complex kinds of activities, especially collaborative ones.
2. **Class time is any time and all the time:** With a Moodle website, the course becomes a continuous flow of ongoing activities available 24 hours a day that students can do whenever they have time.⁷ This flow may be punctuated occasionally by events such as submission deadlines, etc., but a class meeting, preceded by preparation activities and followed by homework, ceases to be the primary “event” in the course. Thus, class meetings can be used more socially, with less time spent on delivering the content and more on spontaneous conversations, problem solving, individual help and encouragement.
3. **Students can add to the core content of the course:** The **TED**Talks obviously form the main content of the course, but students can contribute to that core content easily through Moodle. For instance, they can build a glossary of unfamiliar words to accompany the video transcripts, they can contribute suggestions for which videos to watch, they can add questions to a question bank, and so on.
4. **Certain activities or tasks can be automated:** Although automated activities are less effective in discussion-based courses like this one, where teachers need to be active in forum discussions, a certain degree of automation can still be achieved. When one speaks of automation in Moodle, one is usually referring to the making of a quiz or a series of quizzes linked by pre and post conditions. A quiz, consisting of the standard variety of question types (true/false, multiple choice, matching, etc.), can be set up so that all the feedback and grading is done automatically. Scores are then automatically recorded in the student’s gradebook, and the quiz itself requires little attention from the teacher.

Course outline

The “How We Learn” course that I am developing can be divided into four main parts: the TEDTalks, “blended” (offline and online) activities, a presentation, and a final exam. (See Appendix: for a full schedule of activities.)

- ✧ **TEDTalks:** Students study five TEDTalks in all: the first, third and last talks are chosen by the teacher, while the second and fourth are chosen by students, who suggest a video in Moodle Database and then vote for their three favorites from among all those contributed. Alternating between teacher and student selections in this way allows the course to proceed more smoothly.⁸
- ✧ **Blended activities:** Classroom activities are generally either a preparation for doing the online activities or a follow-up of those activities. For instance, discussions started in class are usually continued online in the forums, while online discussions are also picked up and continued in class; words added online to the glossary are then reviewed in class; and so on.
- ✧ **Presentation:** At the end of the course students are expected to give a TED-style presentation of their own, which is filmed and uploaded to a Moodle Workshop on the course website, where students then assess each other’s talks using criteria produced collaboratively in class.
- ✧ **Final Exam:** The final exam is built using Moodle Quiz out of questions that students themselves create and upload to the exam question bank. The exam is open permanently to be taken as a pre-test; however, conditions are set so that only one random question per video can be attempted within a 24-hour period.

Moodle course page

A Moodle Course Page is the front page of a course website in Moodle and has a layout consisting of two or three columns: the main column in the center for the content of the course, and the smaller columns on the left (and optionally on the right) for modular blocks, such as a calendar, RSS feeds, etc., that can be added to increase the functionality of the website. A course page comes in three different formats: weekly, topic, and social. Generally speaking, the weekly format is better suited for coordinating a course website to accompany scheduled class meetings. The topic format is more appropriate for a course organized around themes or chapters (such as when the course website is intended to follow a course textbook). The social format, on the other hand, is better suited for classes where discussion plays a central role since the main center column, used for content in the other formats, is replaced by a forum (called the Social Forum in the Moodle lingo), where students can interact with each other and the teacher. I decided to use the social format for this particular course to reflect the course’s emphasis on discussion.

Moodle forums

Forums play a central role in Moodle since the open and free exchange of ideas is considered an essential ingredient in social constructivism, an educational philosophy that Moodle endorses, in which knowledge is not acquired simply by the transmission of distinct whole packets of information but is rather constructed piecemeal through the social process of interacting with others, negotiating meanings, debating interpretations, etc. To take full **215**

The screenshot shows a Moodle course page titled "How We Learn". At the top right, it says "You are logged in as" followed by a user name and a "Logout" link. Below the title is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > My courses > How We Learn" and a "Turn editing on" button. The page is divided into three main columns. The left column contains a "Social activities" menu with items like Social Forum, Learning Forum, TED Talks, Transcripts, Glossary, Contributions, Workshop, Final Test, and Japanese (日本語). Below this is a "People" section for "Participants" and a "Settings" section with options for course administration, user management, filters, grades, backup, restore, import, publish, and question bank. The central column is the "Social Forum". It has a title "Social Forum" and a description: "This course will focus on topics in education. It will be held jointly with students in High-Step English from Kanazawa Gakuin University (KGU) and English D from Kanazawa University (KU)." Below the description is a button "Add a new discussion topic". There are four discussion topics listed: "Witty Remarks" (Friday, 13 July 2012, 09:03 pm), "Father's Day" (Saturday, 9 June 2012, 09:56 pm), "Dream graduation trip" (Tuesday, 19 June 2012, 01:23 pm), and "What is your plan for summer vacation?" (Monday, 23 July 2012, 04:23 pm). Each topic shows the author, date, time, and a brief description of the post. The right column contains a "Random glossary entry" block showing the word "adore" and its definition, and a "Recent activity" block showing the last activity since Saturday, 28 July 2012, 09:00 am.

Figure 1. Screenshot of Moodle course page for “How We Learn” course showing the Social Forum in the center column and various blocks in the left and right columns.

advantage of this approach I decided to make two separate forums: one for serious discussions and another for casual talk.

Social Forum

The Social Forum is the forum given top page priority in the social format of Moodle and is the place where I decided to hold the informal discussions. During the course, students started discussions on a wide variety of topics, and participation in the forum was frequent and ongoing with little encouragement needed from me.

Learning Forum

The Learning Forum is just a regular Moodle forum that I named in this way to reflect its function as a place to engage in serious discussions about the content of the **TED**Talks. In this forum I created one blog-style discussion for each **TED**Talk, eventually reaching a total of five discussions by the end of the term. I edited the initial post for each of these discussions to include photos and links to make it appear more like the formal beginning

The screenshot shows the 'How We Learn' Learning Forum interface. On the left is a sidebar menu with sections: People (Participants), Social activities (Social Forum, Learning Forum, TED Talks, Transcripts, Glossary, Contributions, Workshop, Final Test, 日本語 日本語, Questionnaire, Attendance), and Settings (Forum administration, Subscription mode, Course administration, My profile settings, Site administration). The main forum area has a header 'Learning Forum' with a description: 'The learning forum is a place to discuss the TED Talks that we watch in class together.' Below this is an 'Add a new topic' button. Three discussion threads are listed, each with a title, author, date, profile picture, video thumbnail, and a brief description. The threads are: 1. 'TED 1: KEN ROBINSON Says Schools Kill Creativity' by Ken Robinson, 2. 'Gever Tully: 5 dangerous things you should let your kids do' by Gever Tully, and 3. 'Adora Svitak: What adults can learn from kids' by Adora Svitak. Each thread includes a 'Watch video' link and options to 'Edit', 'Delete', and 'Discuss this topic'.


Figure 2: Screenshot of the top page in the Learning Forum showing initial posts (discussion starters) for three of the five TEDTalks used in the course.

Teacher's roles in the forums

A discussion-based course requires that teachers play an active role in the forums, ideally checking them every day. In the forums the teacher can play a variety of roles:

- ✧ **Forum Moderator:** It is important that the teacher moderate the forums to ensure that students are respectful of each other and to model appropriate behavior for engaging in civilized discourse, including how to disagree politely.⁹
- ✧ **Discussion Facilitator:** The teacher should initiate threads, ask questions, make clarifying remarks, etc. in order to keep the discussion moving forward.
- ✧ **Post Editor:** The teacher may choose to edit students' posts in order to give explicit feedback to the posters as well as ensure the comprehensibility of the discussion for all participants.
- ✧ **Thread/Discourse Manager:** In order to manage the logic of the discourse, the teacher may also choose to reposition posts within the discussion thread or re-title the subject lines of a post to reflect the "gist" of the message or add "discourse markers" to clarify the purpose of each post.
- ✧ **Post Evaluator:** The teacher can also evaluate individual posts made by students in a variety of ways.

TED 1: KEN ROBINSON Says Schools Kill Creativity
 by Rick Broadway - Saturday, 28 July 2012, 02:43 pm



Sir Ken Robinson makes an entertaining and profoundly moving case for creating an education system that nurtures (rather than undermines) creativity. Full bio and more links
 Watch video

Sum of ratings: - Edit | Delete | Reply

QUESTION: What is unusual about his presentation? by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 02:41 pm

No visual aids by [redacted] - Wednesday, 30 May 2012, 06:17 pm

Many jokes and funny stories by [redacted] - Thursday, 3 May 2012, 09:13 am

QUESTION: Was it entertaining? by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:04 pm

Self-deprecating humor by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:41 pm

Re: Self-deprecating humor by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:57 pm

stock jokes by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:43 pm

Re: stock jokes by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:58 pm

Personal anecdotes by [redacted] - Thursday, 12 April 2012, 03:55 pm

Re: Personal anecdotes by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:59 pm

Re: Personal anecdotes by [redacted] - Wednesday, 18 April 2012, 02:06 am

Funny stories by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:47 pm

Re: Funny stories by [redacted] - Wednesday, 11 April 2012, 04:48 pm

Re: Funny stories by [redacted] - Wednesday, 18 April 2012, 01:52 am

Re: Funny stories by [redacted] - Thursday, 19 April 2012, 03:38 pm

Re: Funny stories by [redacted] - Saturday, 2 June 2012, 12:08 pm

QUESTION: Any good quotations? by [redacted] - Sunday, 22 April 2012, 05:07 pm

ARGUMENT: Creativity is as important as literacy by [redacted] - Tuesday, 24 April 2012, 02:11 pm

PRO: Can't make stories without imagination by [redacted] - Wednesday, 25 April 2012, 03:31 pm

Re: PRO: Can't make stories without imagination by [redacted] - Monday, 7 May 2012, 09:59 pm

Re: PRO: Can't make stories without imagination by [redacted] - Monday, 7 May 2012, 10:05 pm

Re: PRO: Can't make stories without imagination by [redacted] - Saturday, 2 June 2012, 12:48 pm

PRO: Creativity helps you have and express ideas by [redacted] - Monday, 30 April 2012, 07:54 am

CLARIFY: Creativity helps you have and express ideas by [redacted] - Tuesday, 8 May 2012, 08:15 am

Re: CLARIFY: What you feel and think by yourself helps you improve your skill and knowledge by [redacted] - Tuesday, 8 May 2012, 08:18 am

TEACHING MOMENT: knowledge vs. experience by [redacted] - Tuesday, 8 May 2012, 08:21 am

Re: TEACHING MOMENT: knowledge vs. experience by [redacted] - Wednesday, 9 May 2012, 01:52 pm

CON: Creativity won't arise without literacy by [redacted] - Monday, 30 April 2012, 07:54 am

Re: CON: Creativity won't arise without literacy by Rick Broadway - Monday, 30 April 2012, 10:33 pm

Re: CON: Creativity won't arise without literacy by [redacted] - Friday, 4 May 2012, 08:38 pm

CON: Not everybody can get creativity by [redacted] - Monday, 30 April 2012, 05:53 pm

COUNTER: Creativity is teachable by [redacted] - Saturday, 5 May 2012, 08:46 am

Re: COUNTER: Creativity is teachable by [redacted] - Monday, 7 May 2012, 09:20 pm

Figure 3. Screenshot of a discussion for a TEDTalk video entitled “Schools Kill Creativity” within the Learning Forum. Subject headings have been edited by the teacher to organize and clarify the discussion.

Ratings

In a Moodle Forum a teacher can rate (i.e. grade) students’ individual posts, thereby making forum participation an evaluative criterion of their overall performance, with their ratings automatically calculated and recorded in the Moodle Gradebook. There are a variety of calculation methods (average, count, maximum, minimum, sum, etc.). In this course I chose

accumulate points as they post throughout the term. I rated each post made by a student on a scale of 1–5 points, based loosely on such criteria as length, accuracy, qualitative interest, effort, etc. so that the goal was for each student to gather as many points as possible during the term, starting at 0 and going up to a 100. In other words, a minimum of 20 posts (if a student managed to get a rating of 5 points for each post) would be required to get full credit for the Learning Forum during the term, and likewise for the Social Forum.¹⁰

Grader report

Grader report

Visible groups All participants

How We Learn		Activities 50%		Social Forum	Learning Forum	Glossary	Contributions
Course total	Category total						
99	99	100	100	100	100	100	95
95	94	100	100	100	79	100	97
94	93	100	100	75	100	100	99
96	96	100	83	100	99	100	99
72	67	100	72	2	94	100	94
76	72	92	96	64	75	100	75
84	77	91	61	66	90	100	90
86	84	82	60	100	93	100	93
72	66	76	11	100	78	100	78
76	72	70	65	-	80	100	80
79	76	62	33	100	85	100	85
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
84	81	88	67	81	89	100	89

Figure 4. View of Moodle Gradebook showing the students' cumulative sums of ratings for the Social and Learning Forums as well as other activities.

Moodle Glossary

A Moodle Glossary is a database where students (or the teacher) can contribute information (words, phrases, longer texts, even pictures and sound files) to be indexed alphabetically or categorically and then linked throughout the website for cross-referencing. The word “glossary” can be misleading since it suggests one simple kind of reference database: a glossary of words with their definitions; however, a Moodle Glossary can be used in more versatile ways. In this course, I made two glossaries: one for the TEDTalk transcripts and another for a glossary of vocabulary words and definitions to be added and shared by students as they studied.

Transcripts

In this glossary I created a category for each TEDTalk video and then simply copied and pasted the transcripts from the TED website into each category. Students could, of course, simply read the transcript on the TED website, so I enhanced the transcript in several ways to make it more useful. One, I added links to useful reading tools on third-party sites where **219**

students could get assistance reading the transcript. Two, I added comments about particularly problematic parts of the text. Three, I linked the transcript glossary to the other glossary so that only the particular words that students had decided they wanted to learn were linked to definitions. And lastly, I color-coded sections of the text to indicate parts of the TEDTalks that demonstrated effective presentation techniques that could help students prepare for their own presentations: stories, jokes, personal anecdotes, expressive language, dramatic speech, etc.



Figure 5: Transcript “glossary” showing the first several paragraphs of the text as well as links to reading tools, student-chosen vocabulary linked to definitions, and color-coded text for highlighting presentation techniques.

Vocabulary

To make the course more student-centered I wanted the students to determine on their own the vocabulary they wanted to learn and be tested on. So, rather than preparing a glossary of words, I allowed the students to choose the words they wanted to contribute to the glossary. To motivate them to add words and definitions as they were reading and studying the transcripts, I rated individual glossary submissions in the same way that I rated forum posts. To receive 100 points by the end of the term, students would have to add at least 20 entries to the glossary (again at 5 points each), which means that a class of 10 students would generate at least 200 entries.¹¹

that guides students through the what-where-and-how of making a contribution. There is also a template to control the format of a list page of all of the students' contributions as well as a template for determining the look of each individual entry. Being able to keep the look of all the entries consistent is essential both to avoid clutter, which can overwhelm the students' ability to sort the information visually, but also to enable the teacher to compare and thus evaluate the entries more easily.

Add entry view

The add entry view simplifies for students the task of making a contribution by reducing the procedure to a step-by-step filling out of text boxes or selecting of radio buttons or items from a pull-down menu. All of the other information necessary to create a contribution entry will have been prepared beforehand in the template by the teacher.

List view

The list view is the top view when you open the database. I set up the list view to display each contributor's name (linked to that student's profile), the title of the TEDTalk (linked to the contributed video on the TED website), the TEDTalk presenter's name, the word "summary" (linked to the student's entry page for that contribution), and finally a comment section, where all students could comment and vote on a particular entry.

Contributions

This a database where you will submit the TED Talks that you wish to contribute to the class. You will submit two talks during the semester. You may select videos from the TED Talk website under the Theme: How We Learn.

View list	View single	Search	Add entry	Export	Templates	Fields	Presets
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Contributer	Title	Presenter	Summary	Comments
[blurred]	Schools Kill Creativity	Ken Robinson	Summary [blurred] X	▶Comments (0)
[blurred]	What We Learn Before We're Born	Annie Murphy Paul	Summary [blurred] X	▶Comments (0)
[blurred]	A Circle of Caring	Jok Church	Summary [blurred] X	▶Comments (0)
[blurred]	Try something new for 30 days	Matt Cutts	Summary [blurred] X	▶Comments (0)
[blurred]	RichardSt.John's 8secrets of success	RichardSt.John	Summary [blurred] X	▶Comments (1)

Figure 7. Screenshot of list of students' choices of TEDTalks contributed to the database.

Single entry view

The template for the single entry view was set up to display more detailed information about each contributed TEDTalk, with some of the information simply copied and pasted by students from the TED website but some of it composed by the students themselves.

Contributions

View list **View single** Search Add entry Export Templates Fields Presets

Page: (Previous) 1 ... 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 (Next)

What adults can learn from kids

Theme: How We Learn
Length: 8 minutes
Presenter: Adra Svitak

"Kids already do a lot of learning from adults, and we have a lot to share. I think that adults should start learning from kids."

Child prodigy Adra Svitak says the world needs "childish" thinking: bold ideas, wild creativity and especially optimism. Kids' big dreams deserve high expectations, she says, starting with grownups' willingness to learn from children as much as to teach.

Why you should watch this presentation:
 I'd like to recommend this video. Most people lose sight of their dreams as they enter the adult world. However, we have to value children's dreams when we teach them. Moreover, we have to learn the importance of those things we lost from kids.





[View the contribution](#)

✖

Added this to the database on: Monday 4 June 2012, 09:31 pm

Average of ratings: 100 (1) 100

▼ Comments (4)

-  - 11 Jun, 09:38
 I'd like to watch this video.
 As well as the content, i'm interested in how she speaks in public.
-  - 11 Jun, 16:53
 I like it.
-  - 11 Jun, 17:55
 I would like to watch this presentation.
-  - 11 Jun, 23:02
 I vote this TED Talk.

Add a comment...

Save comment

Figure 8. Screenshot of a single entry view showing video details, rating, and comments (votes). All information was entered by students and all other entries have identical formatting.

Moodle Workshop

I used Moodle Workshop to manage every phase of the student presentation project: 1) the collaborative writing of assessment criteria, 2) the students' submissions of plans and scripts, 3) the uploading of video clips of rehearsals and final presentations,¹² 4) the allocation of presenters' submissions to reviewers for the peer review process, and finally 5) the final grading calculation for both the presentation and the peer assessment.

The screenshot displays the Moodle Workshop management interface. At the top, the course title 'How We Learn' and the workshop name 'Workshop' are visible. The left sidebar contains navigation menus for 'People', 'Social activities', and 'Settings'. The main content area is titled 'Workshop' and features a progress table with the following columns: 'Setup phase', 'Submission phase', 'Assessment phase', 'Grading/evaluation phase', and 'Closed'. The 'Submission phase' is currently active, indicated by a checkmark and a downward arrow. Below the table, there are instructions for submission and a list of student submissions.

Setup phase	Submission phase	Assessment phase	Grading/evaluation phase	Closed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Get the workshop introduction ✓ Provide instructions for submission ✓ Edit assessment form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide instructions for assessment ✓ Submit your work Allocate submissions Open for submissions from Tuesday, 3 July 2012, 02:30 pm (26 days ago) Submissions deadline: Wednesday, 25 July 2012, 11:00 pm (3 days ago) Late submissions are allowed Time restrictions do not apply to you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for assessment from Tuesday, 3 July 2012, 01:00 pm (3 days left) Assessment deadline: Friday, 3 August 2012, 11:00 pm (6 days left) Time restrictions do not apply to you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calculate submission grades Export or submit a submission Calculate assessment grades Export or submit a submission 	

Instructions for submission
Submit your plan for a presentation. (Minimum 100 words)

Your submission

All submissions

- French in action by [redacted] submitted on Thursday, 26 June 2012, 09:07 pm modified on Friday, 09 July 2012, 09:22 pm
- guarantee and relief by [redacted] submitted on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 09:20 am modified on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 09:20 am
- How to use western songs in English class efficiently. by [redacted] submitted on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 10:20 am modified on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 10:20 am
- Parental physical contact by [redacted] submitted on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 am modified on Wednesday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 am
- Barren of Freedom by [redacted] submitted on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 am modified on Tuesday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 am
- Anyone can have great reflexes by [redacted] submitted on Monday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 am modified on Monday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 am
- Individualized Learning by [redacted] submitted on Wednesday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 pm modified on Wednesday, 07 July 2012, 02:02 pm

Figure 9. Screenshot of Moodle Workshop showing management panel for different phases of the project at top and student submissions at bottom. (Submission phase is active.)

Moodle Quiz

To make the final exam for the course I used Moodle Quiz and had students actually submit their own questions to the question bank. It was a fairly typical test with multiple choice, true/false and matching questions about the content and vocabulary of the TEDTalks. However, rather unconventionally, I made the test available to students on a limited basis throughout the term: they could view one randomly selected question per video per 24-hour period, which means that, if they logged in daily and attempted the pre-test each time, they would, in all likelihood, be able to preview all of the questions before actually taking the real test at the end of the term. There were two reasons for setting things up this way: 1) I wanted to create an incentive to encourage students to make the habit of logging into the website as often as possible, and 2) I wanted students to be involved in deciding not only

The screenshot shows the Moodle Quiz configuration interface. At the top, the course is identified as 'How We Learn'. The quiz is titled 'Order and paging: Final Test' and is set to 'Editing quiz' mode. The quiz configuration includes a table of questions:

Page	Question	Grade	Attempts
Page 1	INFO: Ken Rol Answer the questions ...	1.0	1X
	Random question: Ken Robinson S	2.0	1+X
Page 2	Label: Derek : Answer the questions ...	4.0	1+X
	Random question: Derek Sivers: K	5.0	1+X
Page 3	Description Answer the questions ...	7.0	1+X
	Random question: Gever Tully: 5	8.0	1+X
Page 4	INFO: Adora : Answer the questions ...	10.0	1+X
	Random question: Adora Stivak: 1	11.0	1+X
Page 5	Info Answer the questions ...	13.0	1+X
	Random question: Ken Robinson: 1	14.0	1X

On the right side, the 'Question bank contents' panel shows a category named 'How We Learn' with 107 questions. The questions are listed with their types, such as 'Description Answer the questions ...', 'Info Answer the questions ...', 'Label: Derek Sivers: Ken', 'Matching', and 'Close'.

Figure 10: A Moodle Quiz set up page for the “pre-test” version of the final exam, showing one page per TEDTalk, one random question per page, and a question bank (right) with 107 student-made questions.

Other Moodle features

In addition to the main activities above, I utilized other features of Moodle to fulfill several purposes: 1) providing native language support to help students cope with the high-level content, 2) enabling intercollegiate collaboration, and 3) eliciting feedback from the students about the course for future improvements.

Custom role: Native Language Support

I solicited Japanese teachers of English in my department to volunteer to join the course, not as students, but under a specially-created role called Native Language Support.¹⁴ After enrolling them in the course I simply asked the teachers to subscribe to an extra forum on the website that I created and called “Ask Questions in Japanese.”¹⁵ From then on, questions from students posted in this forum were automatically forwarded to the Japanese teachers’ registered email addresses with instructions on how to reply.

Groups

I used the course website to host two courses simultaneously at two different universities. Moodle allows users (i.e. students, teachers, native language supporters) to be divided into either visible groups or invisible groups. The invisible group setting is for when you want two classes of students to be completely invisible to each other, but both courses are managed by the teacher through the same website. For the “How We Learn” course I set up the groups so that all activity was visible between the two classes so that students in both classes could interact online in the forums, vote for each other’s TEDTalk contributions, read each other’s glossary entries, review and assess each other’s presentations, etc.

Questionnaire

There are several modules available as add-ons in Moodle that allow the teacher to conduct surveys of students’ opinions. I used one called Questionnaire to find out what the students thought of the course. The questionnaire was simple to create and administer and the results are compiled automatically.

Conclusion

As this course is still under development, it would be premature to make any definitive conclusions; however, I can make a few remarks. First, I did not have any significant technical troubles. I am not a Moodle beginner, but I was using Moodle 2 for the first time and I managed to build and run the course without any significant problems. Second, the most time-consuming job for the teacher is to manage the forums. The “How We Learn” course had only 11 students total between both universities, so it was quite easy for me to keep up with my forum duties, but I doubt that I could manage such a course if the student number went over 20 or 25, even if I reduced the number of required posts in the forums. Third, the number of TEDTalks – five – turned out to be ideal. I had initially considered doing ten, but this would have made the course very strained. Fourth, though I decided to restrict the course to TEDTalks about one theme in order to give focus to the discussions, I felt that the students wanted to go outside those boundaries and watch videos on other topics. Since one my classes was in the education department, I felt justified in narrowing the focus, but a more general English class would probably benefit from the variety and freedom of students being able to watch whatever they want. All in all, I am very satisfied with the course and look forward to streamlining it over the years to come.

Notes

1. This course was developed using Moodle 2.2.
2. This is part of my rationale for having two online forums: one for social talk and another for more focused discussions. Likewise, I tried to interject humor, stories, and personal anecdotes into my lectures in class about the TEDtalk videos to model playful language behavior.
3. The worst-case scenario for a course that depends on a third-party website is that that website is taken down during the course; therefore, it is important to choose trustworthy providers of content. Nonetheless, it is best to have a backup course. My method was to

- download five TEDtalk videos and embed them in a “hidden” forum, which I planned to “unhide” from students and use in the event of an emergency.
4. The website is located at ted.com.
 5. The software is available for free download at moodle.org
 6. I use both websites independently in my course. Although it is possible to embed the TEDTalks videos in Moodle, so doing would disable the interactive transcript and subtitle functionality mentioned above; therefore, I have students watch/study the videos on the TED website and then participate in all other activities in the Moodle course website.
 7. Around midnight seems to be the most popular time for students to log in.
 8. There is only enough time for students to contribute and vote for two videos because the voting process requires students to watch all of their classmates’ contributions in order to make an informed vote.
 9. I have never had any problems of this nature in my course with Japanese students. Generally speaking, Japanese students tend to err in the opposite extreme, that is, by avoiding conflict and not expressing strong personal opinions they often fail to engage fully with the topic.
 10. This scheme should be adapted to suit the class size to avoid overloading the teacher’s capacity to fulfill his or her roles in the forums. For instance, rating individual posts on a 10-point scale would reduce to 10 the minimum number of posts needed for a perfect score of 100.
 11. In addition, I added a module called “Random Glossary Entry” to the front course page so that every time a student logged in or refreshed that page he or she would be presented with one item, like a flashcard, for review.
 12. I succeeded in using the official Moodle app that enables videos to be uploaded directly from an iPhone. However, there are some issues to be aware of. Videos can only be uploaded to the logged-in user’s “Private Files,” which means that the teacher either has to upload all of the students’ presentations into his or her own private files folder and then move them to the students’ workshop or login as each student at the time of video capture. Also, when capturing video using the Moodle app, the video data is not saved onto the iPhone, so if the data is not transmitted successfully to the website, then it is lost.
 13. The teacher may need to edit or even delete some student-made questions as well as add some of his or her own in order to get a question bank full of good quality questions.
 14. Roles can be assigned to participants in Moodle. Standard roles are course creator, manager, teacher, non-editing teacher, and student. However, these standard roles can be modified to create custom roles with limited or augmented permissions. For instance, the Language Support role I created was a modified student role with the additional privilege of viewing (but not editing) students’ grades.
 15. In Japanese: 日本語で相談室

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Author biodata

Rick Broadaway, Associate Professor, Faculty of Literature, Kanazawa Gakuin University. Correspondence concerning this article can be sent to Kanazawa Gakuin University, Sue-machi 10, Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture, **JAPAN** 920-1392

Appendix

15-week course schedule

OFF-LINE		ON-LINE										
SESSION	Classroom	Moodle Website										
CLASS MEETING	FORUMS		DATABASE					GLOSSARIES		QUIZ		WORKSHOP
Activities	Social	Learning	TED 1	TED 2	TED 3	TED 4	TED 5	Transcript	Vocab.	Question Bank	Final Exam	Presentation
1	- Watch teacher's choice: TED 1											
	- Activities: TED 1											
2	Continue online>>	Free discussion	Watch/ Study					Read TED 1	Submit words	Submit questions		
	- Forum follow-up											
	- Activities: TED 1											
3	Continue online>>	Free discussion	Watch/ Study	submit				Read TED 1	Submit words	Submit questions	Pre-test	
	- Forum follow-up											
	- Introduce contributions: TED 2											
4	Continue online>>	Free discussion	Watch/ Study	vote				Read TED 1	Submit words	Submit questions	Pre-test	
	- Watch students' choice: TED 2											
	- Activities: TED 2											
5	Continue online>>	Free discussion		Watch/ Study				Read TED 2	Submit words	Submit questions	Pre-test	
	- Forum follow-up											
	- Activities: TED 2											
	Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-2	Watch/ Study				Read TED 2	Submit words	Submit questions	Pre-test	
	- Forum follow-up											
	Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-2	Watch/ Study				Read TED 2	Submit words	Submit questions	Pre-test	
	- Forum follow-up											

ON-LINE														
OFF-LINE		Moodle Website												
CLASS MEETING		FORUMS				DATABASE				GLOSSARIES		QUIZ		WORKSHOP
Activities		Social	Learning	TED 1	TED 2	TED 3	TED 4	TED 5	Transcript	Vocab.	Question Bank	Final Exam	Presentation	
SESSION	11	- Forum follow-up												
		- Watch teacher's choice: TED 5												
		- Activities: TED 5												
		Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-5					Watch/ Study	Read TED 5	Submit questions	Pre-test	Assessment criteria	
	12	- Forum follow-up												
		- Activities: TED 5												
		Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-5					Watch/ Study	Read TED 5	Submit questions	Pre-test	Decide topic	
	13	- Forum follow-up												
		- Prepare presentations												
		Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-5								Pre-test	Submit plan	
	14	- Rehearse presentations												
		Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-5										
		Presentations (filmed)										Pre-test	Submit script	
	15	Continue online>>	Free discussion	Discuss TED 1-5								Pre-test	Peer assessment	