JISC case study
L$_2$0 Project: Sharing Language Learning Objects

Is this resource repurposable?

Alison Dickens
Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, University of Southampton

Background

The Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies provides professional development for university staff in the form of conferences, seminars and training workshops. Via our website we disseminate online teaching resources, scholarly articles, news and statistics. The activity described below was undertaken as part of two projects (the *L$_2$0 Project: Sharing Language Learning Objects*[1] and *DeL II: Design Tools for Creating Online Learning Materials*[2]) which explored e-learning in LLAS disciplines and investigated the feasibility of repurposing existing teaching resources in the form of learning objects to be shared via a repository.

Intended outcome

The outcome was a checklist (Flash tool) for teachers and would-be e-learning developers to help assess suitability of paper-based and other existing electronic materials for repurposing as learning objects, and to explore issues of good pedagogic and design practice in e-learning resource development.

The challenge

The Checklist tool came about in response to issues that arose during experiments in repurposing existing electronic materials as learning objects. To test it further, particularly during the L$_2$0 Project, items from the Subject Centre's Material's Bank were selected for repurposing and a template for a learning object was devised. In the course of evaluating materials for repurposing it became clear that a number of factors were contributing to the difficulties subsequently encountered in repurposing these items. For example:

- The amount of text/on-screen reading required
- The need to disaggregate the resources (e.g. remove images, video, audio etc.)
- The need for rewriting (recourse to the original author)
- Copyright issues

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[1] http://www.elanguages.ac.uk/researchcommunity/projects/l2o.html
[2] http://www.elanguages.ac.uk/researchcommunity/projects/detcolm.html

- Feedback – how and what to deliver

- Interactivity – some resources were very content driven

As a result it was felt that there was a need to go back to first principles of LO design and use these in the context of repurposing. Consequently a checklist (delivered as a learning object) was drawn up to help evaluate materials in terms of content, pedagogic purpose and technology. This was formulated as a series of yes/no questions which were collated at the end of each section to produce a summary of responses together with feedback in the form of advice and comments. The final overall score was then calculated and feedback given which guided users to accept or reject a resource for repurposing. A secondary purpose, but perhaps its strongest one, was to help users to think through general questions of good practice in learning object design and general principles of e-learning as opposed to traditional (face-to-face) teaching.
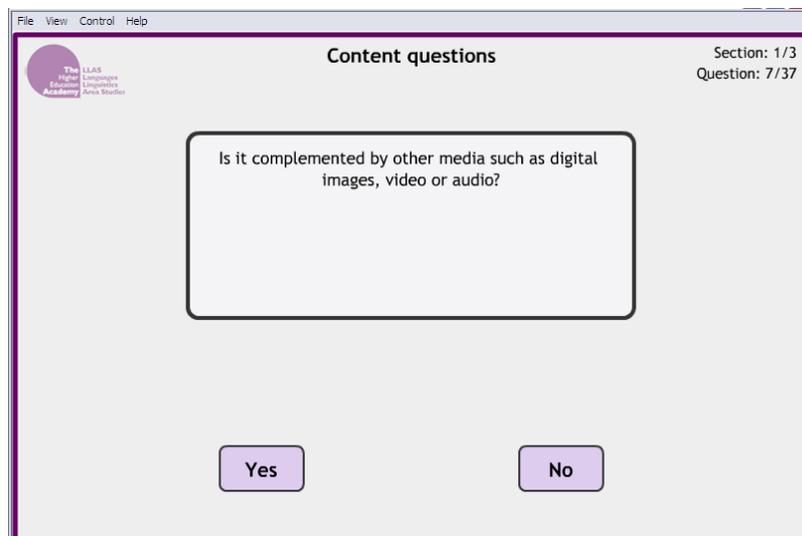
Fig.1 An example of a checklist question
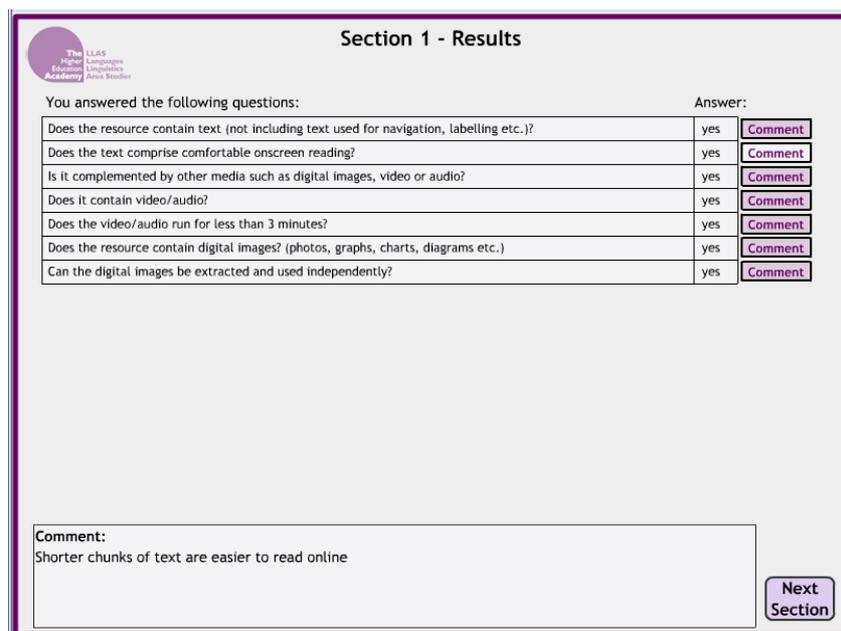
Fig 2. The comments area of section 1.

Established practice

The use of this checklist has led to the development of a pedagogically enhanced learning object development template which is being currently being trialled in workshops for HE teachers.

The e-learning advantage

This checklist was developed to meet the immediate needs of the projects concerned so was of great benefit to the project participants themselves. Participants in the L_20 Project were able to benefit directly from the checklist during the initial stages of converting existing electronic materials into reusable learning objects. The checklist helped them to consider and address a number of the key issues involved in repurposing their own materials appropriately.
The tool is now being used as part of other projects which are training teachers in learning object design and production and it is hoped that it will help to raise some key issues at the early stages of development and/or repurposing that will avoid many of the difficulties and frustrations that were experienced by project participants. Indeed, it should be emphasised that this tool is useful both as a test of repurposeability of existing resources and as a reflective tool for first-time learning object development. The focus is on pedagogy rather than technology thus it is expected that this is the area on which it will have most impact. The reason being that for an experienced classroom teacher it is by no means an easy transition to make from face-to-face teaching to electronic learning.

Key points for effective practice

This case study is intended to draw attention to some fundamental issues that arise in e-learning materials development from a pedagogic point of view. It raises questions of context and methodology for e-learning which may attempt to deliver the same content as traditional methods but will require adaptation for the new medium.

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion this case study recommends that practising teachers who are engaging or who wish to engage in e-learning resource and/or learning object development take a few minutes to consider the materials and content they wish to deliver using the checklist tool which should raise their awareness of some of the questions that need to be addressed and adaptations required for the electronic context.

Additional information

The LO checklist can be downloaded from the LLAS website at:

http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/materialsbank.aspx?resourceid=2698

For further information, contact Alison Dickens: A.M.Dickens@soton.ac.uk