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- Son, J.-B. (2011, October). Intercultural usability of language learning Websites. Paper presented at the Globalization and Localization in CALL (GLoCALL) 2011 Conference, Century Park Hotel, Manila, Philippines.

### ► **Appointments and movements**

- ◇ George MacLean was promoted to Associate Professor at the University of Tsukuba's Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences in September 2011. Congratulations!



### **ONLINE TOOL**

#### **Dokeos: An Online Course Management System**

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In today's world, many courses are designed as blended courses and online course management systems are integrated into the curriculum. Learners are expected to complete some tasks online and submit their projects via the Internet. As there are many online platforms available for blended learning, teachers might have problems in choosing the appropriate platform for their classes. In this article, a course management system called Dokeos (<http://campus.dokeos.com/>) is presented with its features, advantages and disadvantages. Educators might also explore this platform and modify it according to their needs and contexts.

#### **Open Campus – Dokeos**

Dokeos is an open source e-learning and course management tool which can be used to communicate with your students in any course you are giving as a teacher. This platform has been translated into 34 languages till now and it is mostly used for blended learning, in which face to face and online education are mixed. This platform can also be used for online courses since it has some features enabling the teachers and students come together, such as conference, chat, etc.

This platform is free of charge but it is more than free of charge actually. The following quotation was taken from the license of this platform:

The licenses for most software are designed to take away your freedom to share and change it. By contrast, the GNU General Public License is intended to guarantee your freedom to share and change free software -- to make sure the software is free for all its users. ... When we speak of free software, we are referring to freedom, not price. Our General Public Licenses are designed to make sure that you have the freedom to distribute copies of free software (and charge for this service if you wish), that you receive source code or can get it if you want it, that you can change the software or use

pieces of it in new free programs; and that you know you can do these things. (<http://www.dokeos.com/doc/gpl.pdf>)

As it is stated in the license of the platform, it is free to use, change or charge for this service.

## Features of Dokeos

As it can be seen in the following figure, three sections appear on the main page of Dokeos. These are *authoring*, *interaction* and *administration*. The first one is prepared before the course starts; the second part is used throughout the course by the students, and the last part is used for some settings and back up procedure. As it can be understood from their functions, the first and last part is for teachers and the second part is for both students and teachers.

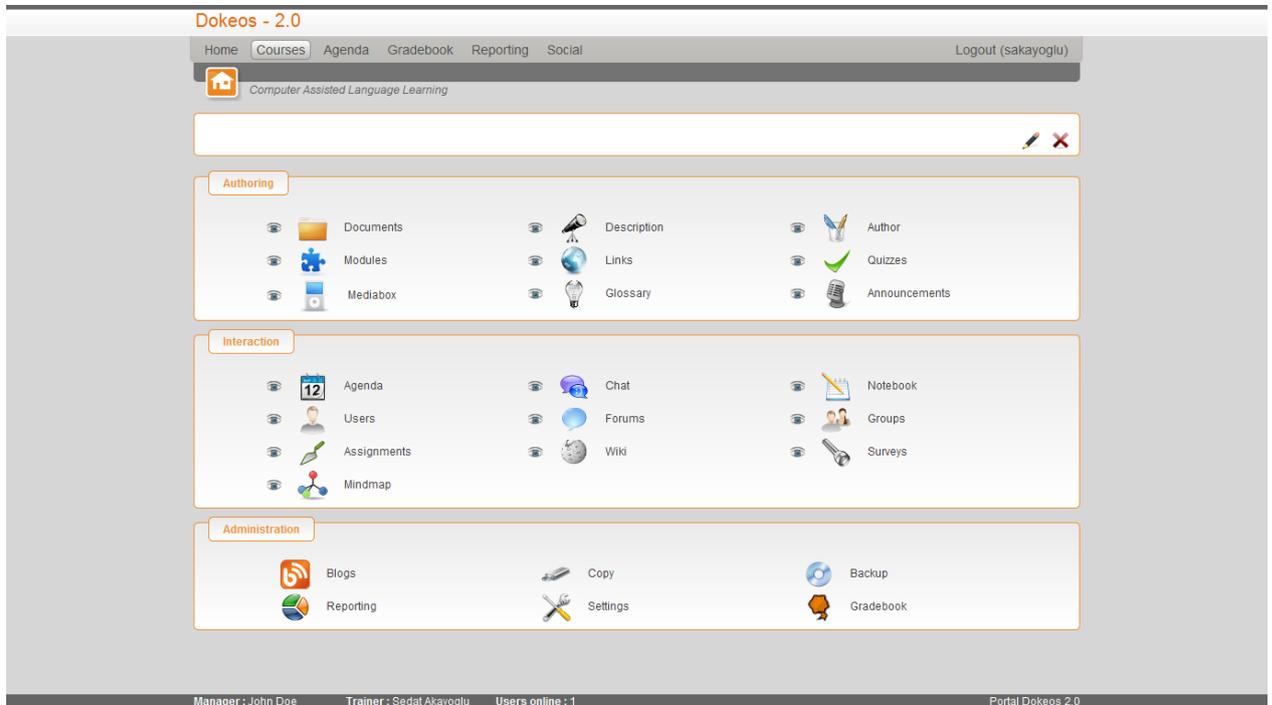


Figure 1. The Main Interface of Dokeos.

## Authoring

- |              |             |                  |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| a. Documents | b. Links    | c. Announcements |
| d. Modules   | e. Glossary | f. Description   |
| g. Mediabox  | h. Author   | i. Quizzes       |

These parts are prepared by the teacher before the course. Teacher might add document, modules, media files, course description, course related links, terms related to the course, quizzes to be completed by the students or announcements. These are the basics of the course and the learners are aware of their responsibilities. Moreover, there is an eye icon next to each tool. When the teacher clicks on this icon, the tool disappears for

the students. For example, the teacher might prefer not to use modules in his/her course, and s/he can close this tool.

### **Interaction**

- |                       |                  |                     |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <i>a. Agenda</i>      | <i>b. Chat</i>   | <i>c. Groups</i>    |
| <i>d. Users</i>       | <i>e. Forums</i> | <i>f. Survey</i>    |
| <i>g. Assignments</i> | <i>h. Wiki</i>   | <i>i. Notebooks</i> |
| <i>j. Mindmap</i>     |                  |                     |

This part helps the teachers to interact with their students or students to interact with their friends. The content of this section is mostly created by the students. Students can submit their assignments, use mindmaps, have a chat with their friends and teachers, discuss on a topic in forums section, work in collaboration on wiki page, create groups and communicate within groups and complete some surveys throughout the course. As in previous part, some tools might be closed. For example, some teachers do not want their students to have a chat with each other. Then, s/he can close this tool simply by clicking on the eye icon.

### **Administration**

- |                    |                     |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>a. Blogs</i>    | <i>b. Reporting</i> | <i>c. Copy</i>      |
| <i>d. Settings</i> | <i>e. Backup</i>    | <i>f. Gradebook</i> |

Using this section, teacher can manage the course. Teacher can control the blogs of the students, receive the reports related to the course, copy and backup the course content, customize the settings of the course and publish the grades of the students in this section. Students cannot control or edit this section and they can only see the gradebook like an announcement. It is advisable that teachers should sometimes backup the content of the course; because during the system updates, some parts of the content might disappear.

### **Advantages**

First of all, it should be accepted that it is one of the most useful tools of language learning with its fascinating features. Many different features can be found in different software applications or web based tools; however, Dokeos combines most of these applications, from wikis to chat, forum to announcements. Generally teachers have to support their online classes integrating different tools together. For example, if the teacher is using Yahooogroups, s/he will need a place to chat and wikis. In some course management tools, it is not allowed to upload documents as word files or photos – it is only allowed to upload text messages as documents and mostly this is not enough for a teacher. Dokeos is the tool which meets all these needs.

Secondly, it is really easy to create and control an online course by using Dokeos for even a novice computer user. For example, if a teacher would like to create a forum, it requires advanced computer knowledge and it is really difficult for an average computer user to create and manage a forum. This web page provides learners and teachers with this feature. In addition to its user friendly design, there is no need to download and install any software. Then, it is very well designed in terms of visual

elements; and this attracts the attention of the students no matter how old they are. In addition to this, Dokeos works really fast regardless of these visual elements.

In Dokeos, it is possible to upload all kinds of files for both teachers and students. Students mostly upload their assignments and teachers usually upload files related to the course content such as assignments, announcements, videos or audio files. This can be found in many web based tools but there is always a limit for file uploading. In Dokeos, there is no limitation for uploading. This is also very important for a teacher who wants to carry out an online course because s/he will need to share many files related to the course.

Another advantage of Dokeos is the chat section. This feature is also available in many environments, but there is an important difference in Dokeos. Here, the chat sessions are saved automatically and saved in chat log file. Therefore, the chat sessions between the students can be controlled by the teacher for further use. In this section, besides chat files, audio and video files are stored, as well.

Besides, creating modules is an important service provided by Dokeos. Modules are a kind of syllabus. They are organized weekly or monthly and different topics for course can be included. Students can also reach this page and follow the course content. They can review the covered topics and learn about the following topics so that the students have a chance to observe the process of the course.

In addition, Dokeos allows teachers to show and hide features. For example, if the teacher is not planning to use the chat section for his/her students, then s/he can hide this for his/her course. In other words, the teacher can adapt the tool according to his/her needs and concerns. This makes the teacher feel that everything is under his/her control and gives a sense of security. Moreover, teacher, as the manager of the web site, can delete or add any students to the online classroom setting controlling the interface. These are the factors that make the teacher feel safe and comfortable to use Dokeos for his/her online course.

## **Disadvantages**

After pointing out the advantages of Dokeos, two disadvantages can be mentioned. One of them is the lack of conference section. Although this feature was available in previous versions, it was removed, most probably because of its load and some problems encountered. It should be integrated again. The other disadvantage can be the 10 seconds delay in chat section. Since it is web based chat, there is 10 seconds delay in sending and receiving a message. In MSN, Yahoo IM or Skype, users download and install software and this makes them faster. As there is a 10-second delay in sending a chat message, it might cause confusion among the users.

## **Summary**

Dokeos is a free online environment which provides many different features and its features include many online computer mediated communication tools which can be found on the Internet. When compared to other online tools, it has many advantages and it is worth using in your classes. Although there is only one or two things we can talk about in terms of disadvantages of this tool, these issues are not thought to be a big problem for your course.

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## WEBSITE REVIEW

### **Zimmer Twins**

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Recognizing the value of visuals in learning more than a century ago, Dewey (1897) put forward:

I believe much of the time and attention now given to the preparation and presentation of lessons might be more wisely and profitably expended in training the student's power of imagery and in seeing to it that he is continually forming definite, vivid, and growing images of the various subjects with which he comes in contact in his experience. (p. 80)

Today, with the help of the Internet and the websites available providing teachers and learners with the opportunity to create animations and comic strips, as Dewey pointed out, lessons or extracurricular activities can be supported easily with images and animations. *Zimmer Twins*, available at <http://www.zimmertwins.com>, is one of the most popular of these websites.

### **Who are the Zimmer Twins?**



*Figure 1.* Main characters. (Copyright © Zimmer Twins. Used with permission)

The website focuses on three main characters: Eva and Edgar, the 12-year-old twins, and their adopted black cat named 13. Users can create animations using these three characters.

### **Creating an animation/a story**

The website allows creating stories or animations based on flash. When the users click on the item “Make a movie” on the main menu and then the item “Make from stretch”

on the next page, the following screen appears. You can also add your own endings to the previously created stories, the endings of which are left.



Figure 2. Animation creation. (Copyright © Zimmer Twins. Used with permission)

The animation creation is simple. First, you will decide in the beginning. You can start with call-outs, actions, emotions and finally with the transitions. Then, you can choose your characters and start your animation. The rest is based on your imagination. It is important to note here that there is no voice option or the use of text-to-speech technology for the characters.

There is also a recently developed version of the *Zimmer Twins*, designed specifically for group instruction and classroom use, available at <http://zimmertwinsatschool.com/>. This version offers the same movie creation steps, but teachers can also create classrooms and students can view each other's work in a private session. Teachers can register for a free account and create a private classroom with a maximum of five students; however, there is a limitation of 12 movies in total. The VIP version, on the other hand, allows teachers to create a classroom for 40 students with unlimited movies for \$9.95 a month. You can check the membership options and compare the free and the VIP version at <http://zimmertwinsatschool.com/membership>.

### Possible uses in language teaching

The *Zimmer Twins* provides us with several ideas to apply to language learning. Considering the language learning and teaching activities, the possible uses can focus on form-focused grammar practice activities in which learners try to come up with some stories using the newly learnt structures and lexical items. The following are just examples and based on Kılıçkaya's (2010) suggestions on the use of *Xtranormal* and text-to-speech technology.

- Learner/teachers can write dialogues for specific topics such as bad habits and advising a friend who asks for help to buy a new computer.
- Learners/teachers can make the characters talk about vocabulary items or grammatical structures.
- Learners/teachers can create monologues in which characters talk about their own cultures or dialogues between two characters on specific cultures, differences and similarities, which will foster tolerance and understanding.
- Learners/teachers can create stories or news on the daily issues.
- Learners/teachers can create their own soap opera and add different scenes each week by the same learners or different learners. (p. 1427)

### Other websites dealing with animation creation

Website	URL
PIXTON	<a href="http://www.pixton.com/">http://www.pixton.com/</a>
XTRANORMAL	<a href="http://www.xtranormal.com/">http://www.xtranormal.com/</a>
GO ANIMATE!	<a href="http://goanimate.com/">http://goanimate.com/</a>
TOONDOO	<a href="http://www.toondoo.com/">http://www.toondoo.com/</a>
MAKEBELIFCOMIX	<a href="http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/">http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/</a>
STRIPGENERATOR	<a href="http://stripgenerator.com/">http://stripgenerator.com/</a>

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### ONGOING PROJECTS

#### EU Project on Interactive Whiteboards in Language Education

Ton Koenraad

iTILT stands for *interactive Technologies In Language Teaching*, and is a European project (2011-2013) which aims to promote effective use of interactive whiteboards in Modern Foreign Language Education. Interactive whiteboards may look like normal whiteboards but can significantly transform the language classroom. For this to happen, teachers need to be given adequate training and support in how to use the tool communicatively, to be aware of strategies and procedures for designing effective IWB materials, and to have the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. Visit the project's website at <http://itilt.eu> and/or download the latest newsletter at <http://itilt.eu/node/38> to find out more about the project's aims and progress.



**International Course 'Methodologies and Technologies to Promote Oral  
Communication in Language Education'**

Ton Koenraad

The Universities of Utrecht (<http://www.uu.nl>) and Valencia (<http://www.uv.es/>), in cooperation with TELLConsult (<http://www.tellconsult.eu>) and the Utrecht Summer School (<http://www.utrechtsummerschool.nl/>), offer a 5-day course in which (student) language teachers can explore the educational possibilities of a number Web 2.0 applications, including video webconferencing and 3D virtual worlds, to support the development of L2 speaking and intercultural skills. Participants will be trained in developing, supervising and assessing learning activities that can be realised with the selected applications, possibly in collaboration with international colleagues. In 2012 the course will be run twice: in Utrecht, Netherlands in early July (week 27) and in Valencia, Spain, the second week of October (week 42). For more details and registration, please consult the course page at the social sciences section of the Utrecht Summer School site:

<http://www.utrechtsummerschool.nl/index.php?type=courses&code=S26>.

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**English Avatar Website**

Adon Kumar

After completing my Master's degree in Applied Linguistics, I wanted to develop an eLearning website which focused on the student, addressed affective factors and motivated teachers to be creative online. I am about to launch my website [www.englishavatar.com](http://www.englishavatar.com) which will enable a browser-based video conferencing eLearning environment.

From a pedagogy perspective, it allows the teacher to apply their own skills and experience to create their own lesson plans and deliver these online. This means that the same course can be delivered by different teachers using their own lesson plans. This will motivate teachers to be innovative in the way they apply their subject-matter knowledge and eLearning/Teaching principles. They can also compare their lesson plans with the other teachers who will deliver the same lessons. In facilitating a collaborative teaching and learning environment, the site will also enable teachers to gain valuable technology and eTeaching experience.

As for students, my site offers them the ability to choose their own teacher, the date and time to enrol on the online class. This student-centred website empowers the student to try out a teacher and if not satisfied, choose another teacher who delivers the same lesson. An under-performing teacher will most-likely fail to attract new students. So, there is a compelling and competitive reason for the teacher to excel.

Unlike many other eLearning websites, EnglishAvatar.com uses standard and ubiquitous technologies, namely a computer, webcam, headset, microphone and the browser. These are all standard devices and applications on a modern computer. There is no need to download third-party applications and get bogged-down in complicated set-up procedures, separate IDs etc. The Paypal online payment system and video conferencing systems are fully integrated and does not require multiple applications or browser windows to be opened.

How does it work? Teachers can register for free and apply to become a teacher. Then a rigorous online approval process is initiated and the teacher is approved or declined. Once approved, the teacher can create lessons and set the time and date they wish to deliver their lessons. All lessons also go through an approval process to ensure quality and relevance of content. The approved lessons are then published on the website for students to enrol in. Students also register for free and can see a range of online lessons that they can choose from. They then pay a fee online via PayPal and enrol on the lesson that suits their time and date. Students have the choice of enrolling in a private one-on-one coaching session or attend a group session. The fee varies accordingly but the group class session is limited to a maximum of four students to make it interactive as well as personal for both students and teachers. Both the teacher and students are given a class code which they use to enter an online class.

Both students and teachers are reminded by the system to attend the scheduled classes as enrolled. When the time arrives the system connects the teacher and the student/s automatically and the video session begins. The system will turn on the webcam and microphone automatically and display both the teacher and students on a single webpage as five square frames. All participants can interact, engage and communicate. The sessions are either for half-hour or full-hour. The teacher has control of the students such as muting a student's microphone.

In the next phase of development, I hope to integrate a browser-based online electronic whiteboard, remote control of the students' keyboard and mouse, and integration with mobile devices. The current website can also be accessed via Smartphones, iPads and Tablet PCs. Teaching and learning on-the-go is now possible.



## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **GLoCALL 2011**

<http://glocall.org/>

27-29 October 2011

De La Salle University & Century Park Hotel, Manila, Philippines

The GLoCALL 2011 Conference attracted over 200 delegates from Australia, China, France, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, UK, USA, Vietnam and the Philippines. Here are some photos from the conference.





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### **Outside the Box: The Tsukuba Multi-Lingual Forum**

George MacLean and James Elwood have been editing *Outside the Box: The Tsukuba Multi-Lingual Forum* for the last few years (print ISSN 1883-7409; on-line ISSN 1884-0813). We welcome contributions from both students and teachers, young and old, inside and outside the university community. The *Outside the Box Forum* is a publication which pertains to all aspects of language learning, other linguistic topics, your research, your experiences as a language learner or teacher, reviews, tips, procedures, and interesting places in cyberspace or the real world. Online versions of previously published issues can be viewed at <http://www.otbforum.net/>

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### **Seeking Collaborators**

1. ScanRead.me: Scan and read any uploaded text with online functions at <http://scanread.freeweb.me>
2. CALL4All.us (<http://call4all.us>) is a language education repository and serves as a forum for sharing CALL sites, program and collaboration proposals.
3. iTuzi.net (<http://www.ituzi.net/>) is a Moodle-based system that includes hundreds of materials for you to use in your classes and in research. The site will allow you to: keep attendance; record grades - export to a spreadsheet; establish a course schedule with events and activities listed; create- administer - and analyze tests and questionnaires; use blogs, forums, chats, wikis, etc in the classroom; upload all activities; upload handouts, Flash materials, presentations, MP3, etc for students to use; and add your own content to your classes. These materials can be shared or held privately for your own classes. The site also includes: questions for the 3,000 most frequently used words broken into 5 bands for students to practice or be tested with; dozens of timed reading activities written in HotPotatoes, which can also be graded; dozens of listening activities using MP3s and CLOZE; and dozens of ready-made handouts. There are many possibilities here for research and publication. The site provides an excellent structure to share materials, store research data, and collaborate with others while we investigate the impact of technology on language acquisition and language teaching.
4. Contact: John Paul Loucky (loucky@seinan-jo.ac.jp)

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### **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

- Members are invited to send APACALL Webmaster their names and personal homepage addresses to be listed on the 'Resources' page of the APACALL Web site.
- Your contributions to this newsletter are always welcome. Please send your news items to [Webmaster@apacall.org](mailto:Webmaster@apacall.org).

