POLISH - Language Game

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After writing a paper about serious games for my Literature Study course, I decided to create one myself. My Project Multimedia is an educational language game in XIMPEL platform. The players can learn basic Polish words while having fun.

The idea came to me very quickly - I did not have to think too long about a topic for my project. I study with international students and they keep asking me to teach them some Polish vocabulary. I thought that it could be nice to have a simple game that would help them with learning. The first plan was to create a game consisting of eight smaller parts and a dictionary. However, after finishing the first part, I realized that it is not the amount, but the quality, that is more important. I decided to cut it to only four games and a dictionary. Because of this I could concentrate on each part and show more possibilities of the XIMPEL platform as an environment for language games. My project, if used for education, could work as a template and be extended with many more small games and words. After creating the first game, I could easily only change the vocabulary, pictures and videos and adjust the XML code.

My game covers four topics: weather (phenomena, months, seasons, etc), animals, colours and fruits and vegetables. In each of them I was trying to show all the possibilities given by XIMPEL. The tasks include:

1) choosing one picture (with a tag) out of four, that is the answer for a simple question
2) answering yes/no questions while playing a video
3) choosing one picture out of four, where the caption is not correct
4) finding a particular item within a bigger picture

Using multimedia for my language game makes it more appealing and easier to learn. Players not only learn words, but also visualize them, which for most, makes it easier to remember. That's why XIMPEL seems to be appropriate for implementing such games. Although in a basic version it allows the use of videos only, I have added an option of using pictures too (thanks to a tutorial).

The first plan was to create a game for children, but when working on it, I have changed my mind. It can be used also by adults, who have started learning Polish but whose

knowledge is still very basic. Therefore, I decided to use real photos of the animals, fruits, etc. instead of colourful pictures for children. I used few videos from cartoons on purpose - they are in the "Colours" section and I decided that colours in an animation will be more clear than in any other movie.

Creating such a game was time consuming. Apart from learning the XIMPEL platform and reading all the necessary tutorials, looking for appropriate pictures and videos and writing long XML code file, I had to learn how to create videos in Adobe After Effects, so I could prepare introductory videos for each game. They show all the words that are being used in a game and are meant to teach players. Of course it is not a self-sustaining teacher - students must be willing to learn the new words; they can pause the video and write the words down to help them remember. After this part has been finished, they can start playing and check their knowledge.

Although I can imagine better ways of teaching, within the XIMPEL platform it is possible to teach by multimedia only. Now, when my game is finished, I think that it was a good idea to use it. It is a new approach to a language game, but it seems to work. The only drawback of XIMPEL was that it does not support the option of having a few overlays directing to the same subject. An exemplary question of finding a picture with an incorrect caption could lead to only 2 different subjects – the first one if the player has chosen the correct answer (so they gain points) and the second one for all of the others (so 3 in the case of my game) options. Unfortunately in XIMPEL it does not work, so I was forced to create 3 identical subjects (only with different names) for each question, which makes the code much longer that it has to be. Maybe it would be a nice idea to extend the platform with such an option.