Poster paper

New Dimensions to On-line Presentations

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Flexible learning is gaining greater importance with the advent of greater number of students working remotely as well as higher speed access being available. This paper builds upon the online presentation, which is a web based classroom application designed for students to present and /or participate remotely. The initial application first developed in 2002, has been modified with a view to upgrade the out-dated components, as well as to incorporate new requirements, and revise programming logic necessitated by these changes. In the new design, the application can now pronounce the text with real voice type (male or female) based on the user's gender type stored in the server. In the absence of this feature the control existed with the remote-end user of the application who could select the gender at random.

Speech components

In previous design, Chant SpeechKit 3 component (evaluation version) was used in our application to produce speech output. The evaluation period has expired and this version of Chant SpeechKit software has been replaced by a newer version in the market that enables the following new feature.

During the modification, this design has been reviewed, Microsoft Agent 2.0 was chosen to replace Chant SpeechKit component for providing speech function. This decision was based on following factors.

- Microsoft Agent is a technology that provides a foundation for more natural ways for people to communicate with their computers. It can be easily customised to our application need.
- It enhances the user interface of the application and Web pages with interactive personalities in the form of animated characters.
- In this application design, Presentation Narrator for Microsoft Agent (refer to the technology of utilizing Microsoft Agent services in Microsoft® PowerPoint presentation) has already been used by our students in preparing presentation documents.

The application has been tested to better elicit the user requirements and to obtain the feed back from all participants. The test plan involves a three tier testing. The first phase of testing of the application involved testing in one of the campus labs. The second test was carried out from remote locations of the author's residence computers over the web. On campus testing had shown very promising results. Authors are not fully satisfied with off campus (from residence) testing. It is expected that some more time is required for remote testing before the students could use it for their courses.

The developed application is designed for a single course and needs to be upgraded to enable its use by multiple courses simultaneously.