The University of Arizona

MIS 111 Freshman Honors Showcase

WizIQ
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Executive Summary

The world of learning is changing rapidly, expanding and evolving as new technology allows for more integration of the internet and mobile devices into daily life. In a society where many spend countless hours staring at their computer or smartphone, traditional learning is sometimes considered an inconvenience. WizIQ seeks to bring the two together, allowing for productive learning to be done while integrating computer and mobile technology, allowing the learner to study at any time and place. Teachers and professors can upload learning material, tests, activities, audio, and video material for students to access on the Online Academy. WizIQ can also enhance traditional learning in schools, especially at the university level. The WizIQ Virtual Classroom allows lectures, readings, and other learning materials to be posted online, as well as linked to existing websites such as Blackboard. This adaptability allows WizIQ to be applied to both a classroom and professional setting, and can be especially useful when learning things such as a foreign language or specific training, giving the learner an enhanced degree of immersion. Applied to the classroom of Chinese 101, WizIQ can supplement the existing methods of learning and aid in student studying, building a stronger foundation for development in the language.
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Introduction

Due to the difficulty many experience with learning a foreign language, our team aims to use WizIQ’s on-the-go accessibility to help create a more immersive atmosphere. This would allow students learning difficult languages, such as Mandarin Chinese or Russian, to access audio and video files to practice proper pronunciation, one of the most difficult aspects to learning these languages. At the University of Arizona, languages like Mandarin Chinese are five unit classes, and require an extra level of learning, given that Mandarin is a tonal language with a character-based writing system. WizIQ can be adopted as a way to supplement the students’ studying for these aspects of a language that they wouldn’t encounter in other languages such as Spanish or French. Doing so would allow students to perform better on class speaking drills and performances, as well as a greater retention of the language as a whole. With WizIQ, students can better prepare themselves to succeed in a global economy where Mandarin Chinese is becoming one of the must-know languages.

Product Assessment Overview

When it was released in 2007 by brothers Harman and Harbir Singh, WizIQ was designed as an online education system that would be useful for teachers to teach students no matter the distance. While the market for online learning is filled with colleges and universities setting up online courses, WizIQ is unique in that it can be accessed by anyone, from any computer or mobile device, and doesn’t require registration with a college or university, nor does it require any additional software. This adds a convenience factor to learning and capitalizes on the popularity of smartphones and other mobile devices. The use of these devices takes up a large portion of many
people’s daily lives, much of it spent on social media, games, or other unproductive activities. Therefore, an app is an excellent method of bringing learning to more people, as it wouldn’t interfere with their everyday schedule. Other sites that offer online learning are often limited in scope; many are courses held by colleges and universities, still others are restricted to a certain aspect to learning, such as math or science. Sites such as Khan Academy are much broader in scope, but lack the ability to offer individual attention to a teacher or professor. WizIQ addresses all of these issues, giving the user the ability to join virtual classrooms hosted by teachers who can offer a greater degree of individual attention and give personal feedback to student performance.

There are two main aspects of WizIQ, the Online Academy, and the Virtual Classroom. The Online Academy is geared towards a larger, general learning audience, while the Virtual Classroom is focused towards supplementing existing classes in college, supporting lecture and note uploads. This does come at a cost, which increases the larger the number of students in an academy or classroom. The Online Academy has three options: Free, Premium, and Enterprise. The Free Version comes at no cost for 1GB of storage and supports three user accounts, a customized academy, access to mobile learning, and email support. The Premium version offers greater customization, more user accounts, and 24/7 customer service by phone, email and chat. The cost of Premium depends on the number of users, with options for 25, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, 5000, 10,000, and 20,000 users, starting at $83/month for 25 users, and going up to $2920/month for 20,000 users (See Appendix for range of varying prices for Online Academy). These charges are billed annually. With Premium, storage can be increased
for $1/GB/month. The Enterprise Online Academy is meant for corporations and other large organizations to use WizIQ to train employees and offer greater networking. Pricing is dependent on the specific client and their needs. This option includes full customization, including HTML and CSS, unlimited users, the creation of multiple academies, advanced analytics and corporate recommendations, design and marketing, and a dedicated support technician. Storage capacity starts at 10GB and can be increased depending on client requirements. The Virtual Classroom is very different in terms of pricing and plans. It offers up to nine classrooms with anywhere from 10 to 500 students. Pricing starts at $16/month for one classroom with 10 students, to $1118/month for nine classes with 500 students each. Users can also add a plugin to another host website for 20% of the total cost for the Virtual Classroom. External host sites include Blackboard, Moodle, and WordPress. Both the Online Academy and the Virtual Classroom come with a 30-Day Free Trial.

WizIQ is privately owned and operates out of eight offices, three in the U.S. and five in India. There are over 200 WizIQ employees working in these offices, providing consumer and technical support. Most of its revenue comes from academy and classroom payments, but the company does receive large investments from corporate sponsors. These include Bertelsmann India Investments and Kaizen Private Equity. Individuals and corporations can also become partners with WizIQ to integrate the programs into their businesses or other ventures, whether they are technology partners, resellers, or referral partners. This is advertised on the WizIQ website as a way to attract more consumers from the business aspect of the company as a way to generate higher revenue. They also advertise on social media, specifically Facebook, Twitter,
YouTube, and Pinterest. All are fairly active and draw support from users, with over 150,000 likes on Facebook. This brings WizIQ free advertising, as mentions of them will show on the feeds of all of the users’ friends and followers. Utilizing the effectiveness of social media allows WizIQ to attract a greater number potential users.

In terms of our team’s project, WizIQ’s mobile app and accessibility are key in advancing the learning of difficult languages, especially Mandarin Chinese. The Online Academy allows for audio and video clips to be uploaded for all students to access, giving them accurate pronunciation practice rather than having to practice from memory. This is highly useful because Mandarin is a tonal language, relying on the changing sound rather than the syllable itself to differentiate between words. This is difficult for non-tonal language speakers to understand, so 24/7 access to practice material would greatly enhance learning and retention. Quizzes and tests can also be uploaded to the academy so that students can practice Chinese character recognition. All of WizIQ’s features are website and app based, hosted through their servers in the U.S. and India. This allows for any user with a computer or smartphone to access their materials at any time. Given the prevalence of smartphone use among University of Arizona students and the full time access to the library computer lab, students would never be without practice material. The app is supported by any Apple or Android device, and is available on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store for free with a valid WizIQ account. An account requires a name, password, email, phone number, country, and choice of student, individual teacher, or organization account. Being so widely supported, WizIQ can easily be applied to any situation or clientele, expanding learning possibilities everywhere.
Proposed Instructional Activity

WizIQ is the most suitable for a market that requires engaging learning. Languages tend to demand more focused learning because they are usually less intuitive and more unknown to students when beginning to learn them. Out of all of the language departments at the University, we chose the Chinese department for our product because it is one of the hardest languages to learn on one’s own. This product can be used for other academic disciplines as well, as the product is not exclusive to any one subject. This is best for the introductory level of Chinese, as beginners need the most interaction with instructors and peers to perfect the complex pronunciations, tones, and character recognition.

Chinese classes would use our product to engage students outside of class. Our proposed method would be to use WizIQ as a study tool to allow students to do short assignments on the Online Academy outside of class. Quizzes can be administered through the Online Academy inside and outside of class as well. Also, the professor could hold sessions in the Virtual Classroom at their own discretion to give students a way to work with an expert to perfect what they have been learning. The live video chat feature of the Virtual Classroom would allow students and teachers to speak and work on pronunciation and tone, one of the hardest subjects of the Chinese language to grasp. WizIQ is a much more effective way for students to learn Chinese online.

With WizIQ, student evaluation is easy. Quizzes and tests can be administered through the application and taken by students. A professor can even get comprehensive summaries of the test data, giving high and low scores, analyzing which problems were
toughest for students, and more. Graded assessments that typically waste paper can be easily given on WizIQ. This can even make grading easier for professors, as WizIQ can automatically score multiple choice answers. Tracking and assessing student learning is made much simpler by incorporating WizIQ into classes.

Adopting WizIQ into the Chinese department would surely improve student performance in the class. Practice materials, lessons, and quizzes would all be in the same place, making learning much easier and faster for students. In Chinese specifically, professors could upload audio files so that students could hear pronunciations better to allow them to assess their speaking at home. Students can chat amongst themselves in the Virtual Classroom to discuss problems. Also, they can video chat to practice having conversations in Chinese with one another, as well as with the professor. However, all of this would require a little bit more effort from the professor, but, if professors really want to improve their students’ understanding of Chinese, they must be willing to put in the extra work.

Many classes would benefit from a product like WizIQ. It is not subject-specific, so there were many candidates for us to choose from. We decided that language courses require the most teacher-student and student-student interaction, so from there, we ended up choosing the Chinese department. One of our group members is currently enrolled in a Chinese course, and he said that it would be the best option since it is so difficult to learn. From here, we wondered if it would be better for higher-level or lower-level learners, and it seemed that beginners in Chinese 101 would benefit the most from WizIQ. One of the most troubling things about learning Chinese is learning it at home,
so having a resource like WizIQ would help beginners have a much more guided learning experience.

Applying WizIQ to Chinese 101 is modifying many existing methods in the current class. First of all, it can change how some quizzes are given by allowing them to be online on this resource. This is an improvement because they are much automatically graded through WizIQ, paper tests would not have to be administered as often, and the professor could have a detailed summary about test results. Second, WizIQ can be the new resource where the homework is given to students. It would be easy for the students to find, and professors could give short homework quizzes through WizIQ to check participation. Group work would be much simpler with WizIQ, and with the busy schedules of many college students, having them work together through the Virtual Academy feature would help a lot. These are good improvements to a system that can leave students feeling helpless and on their own while learning an entirely new language.

Feasibility/Design Assessment

Our group spoke with Professor Cindy Lee Shih of the East-Asian studies department. She teaches Chinese 101 and is the professor of one of our group members. We discussed the feasibility of adopting this class into Chinese 101. Her feedback was a mix of positivity and negativity. Professor Shih thought the product was interesting and could be helpful to students. However, she believed that adopting it would be much more effort than she was willing to put in to her class. We never thought about that problem, so it changed our understanding a little bit. In order for this product to be the most effective, professors need to be willing to work outside of class with
students. We still believe that this product would be very appropriate for the course, but it depends wholly on the professor.

Any student enrolled at the University of Arizona is capable of using WizIQ. It requires access to a computer and internet. It is not hard for computers to run it, so the computers at the library would be suitable for the use of students if they do not possess their own computer or internet. However, if students do not have laptops or smart phones, WizIQ would not be able to be used inside of the classroom. Although this could be a problem, the percentage of students who do not have any access to either of these resources is very low, and the amount of people who have both would allow them to share with the ones who have neither. WizIQ is simple to use and does not require much effort for students to take advantage of it.

In order for students to operate WizIQ, it would probably be helpful for the professor to walk them through it for one class session. There are tutorials on the website to help instructors and students both learn how to use it. It is a very simple program to use, and there would not be much trouble with a learning curve when adopting this into the Chinese course. However, if students have trouble, they could look up YouTube videos to figure out whatever they were having problems with. The website is simple and intuitive, and there would not be much of a problem with learning to operate it.

While WizIQ is a simple tool to use, it does have a price. Setting up an Online Academy costs $83/month, and setting up a Virtual Classroom changes price depending on the amount of students. For a classroom with 25 attendees, the price is $25/month. To help pay for this, the professor can set a price for students to join.
Altogether, with many students assisting in the cost, the price would decrease significantly. With 25 students splitting the cost, to pay for a Virtual Classroom and an Online Academy would total out to $4.32 per month, which is a small price to pay for the large improvements in learning that would come from adopting WizIQ.

No matter how good of a product it is, any online resource can have troubles. If the website is under maintenance or is down for any reason, there are alternatives. Homework and quizzes can be posted on D2L or blackboard, or given out on paper. Lectures that would have been given online could be given during class or could be recorded and posted somewhere else. The only real problem would be that the interaction between users would be lost. If WizIQ is down for a short period of time, there are many alternatives that can be used to keep class going.

WizIQ was not adopted for a class exercise in the Chinese Language Department due to the amount of time that was left in the semester, and considering it would interrupt the current learning process of the students and the amount of time it would take to proctor Professor Shih to be comfortable with assignments. However, if testing of the product were to be done, a student’s FERPA (Family Educational Rights Private Act of 1974) will still be enforced. The professor will be able to look and grade the student’s work within the website, and keep the privacy of their grades in their own personal profile on the current D2L website currently being used by The University of Arizona. With WizIQ large amount of technological devices within the website, students with visual, hearing, motor, or cognitive disabilities will not put the individual student at a disadvantage.
WizIQ has the ability to monitor the use of the product by the user, but will not interfere with curriculum or data that is posted onto the online classroom. The website gives sole responsibility of the proctor or user to take care of any intellectual data and property the student’s posts onto the websites. A student’s privacy will not be infringed upon for the product’s sole purpose is to add a different immersive way to teach a class. The same respect and rules will be the same as physically being in the classroom on the WizIQ online classroom.

Next Steps / Future Work

Professor Cindy Shih from the Chinese Language Department was not interested in the WizIQ product due to many discrepancies that would affect the learning process of Mandarin for students. Professor Shih explained that the Mandarin Language is very unique compared to studying any other language offered at the University of Arizona. The main concern to her was the student integrity in the online class. The Chinese language relies on a large amount of memorization in order to learn the language. With the online aspect of the program, the Chinese Professor proctoring the online quiz felt as though a student can easily look for the answers in the required course book for the class.

A video camera option is available for WizIQ, but monitoring the student in the class taking a quiz or in class work is not the same as doing the same exact thing in a classroom. Professor Shih also pointed out the teacher cannot see what the student has on his or her screen while class is in session. WizIQ also limits the ability to actually write out the calligraphy that is involved in the Chinese language. Professor Shih said, overall, the product is ineffective way of teaching the students to learn the language,
and the product would limit the things that they could possibly teach the students because the online aspect of the website. Professor Shih strongly believed that sitting in class was the most effective way of teaching the language.

Professor Shih did not like an online course for the Chinese language, but she did agree with our group in regards to another studying tool for the student. Having a teacher available to act as support for the student who needs help with homework or speaking the language itself can be effective for learning the language. It becomes very efficient for the student considering they do not need to physically come in to see the professor for help. However, the Professor Shih wanted to know how many students would actually use this as a studying device, and encourage to gather data from students over a period of time to and survey them on the effectiveness of the project. In order to gather students, she offered to publish WizIQ to the class course page to the set of classes she teaches throughout the semester. Do to the amount of time left in the semester, our group believed we would get an insufficient amount of data in order to persuade Professor Shih to take up the project.

Even with the short amount of time left, our group still wanted to get the online resource in trial mode for the students. By communicating with WizIQ, people who attend the showcase will be able to look at the many features WizIQ holds. This trial will not test effectivity of the product, but test the interest people have in the product in order for the guests to take self-interest and take time to understand WizIQ, and maybe invest in the online resource.

Although we were turned down by Professor Shih to take on the product, her advice opened many opportunities for the group. She did not see the potential of the
website becoming an actual online class for the Chinese department, but passionately talked about other language departments taking up this product. The two main languages we started looking at is the French and Spanish language because the popularity of the language taken at the University of Arizona. With a large amount of students taking these classes, students might not be able to grab the class they want. Adding an online class for these two language departments will add more students to experience a different immerse way than a regular Spanish or French class. With many similarities to the characters of the English, Spanish and French languages, it will less likely limit the proctors from teaching the curriculum unlike Chinese Language.

Conclusions

WizIQ is an online environment that adds another option for students to learn and take a class within the comfort of their surroundings. The product has multiple technological features that makes the student and teacher feel as though they are right beside the student, every step of the way of the learning process. WizIQ can highly benefit the classes like the language department of the University of Arizona that take a large amount of studying and memorizing in order to learn and speak the language. WizIQ adds another work and study option for students who need to take language course, and possibly improve the amount the effectivity of learning the language itself. Teachers can and have the ability to monitor the growth of the student based and thoroughly analyze what the student needs to improve on. The website adds a sense of trust between the student and the teacher, to show that the student takes the time to take the time to learn and speak a new language.
Bibliography

Appendix

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![Online Academy Price Per Number of Students](image)