Using English Firsthand in an on-demand curriculum
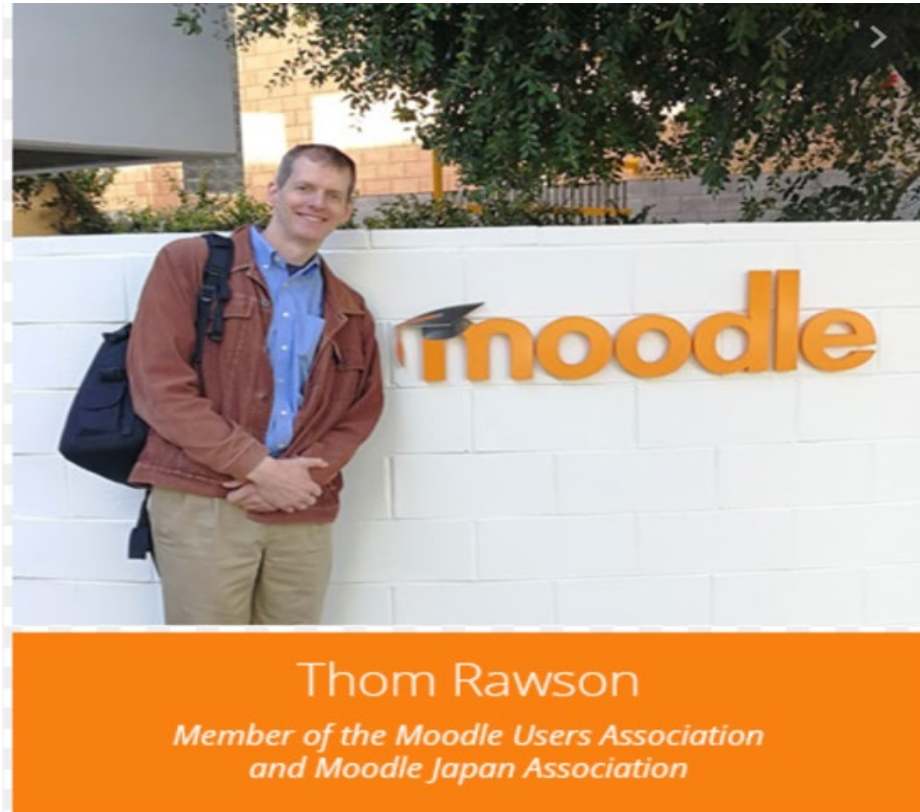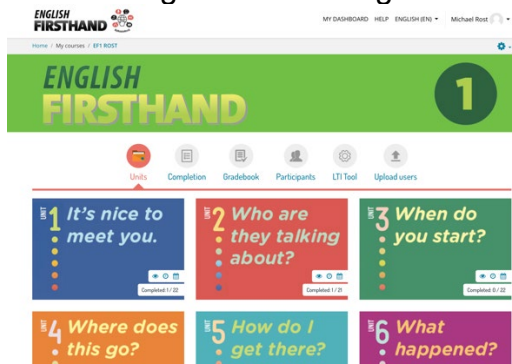
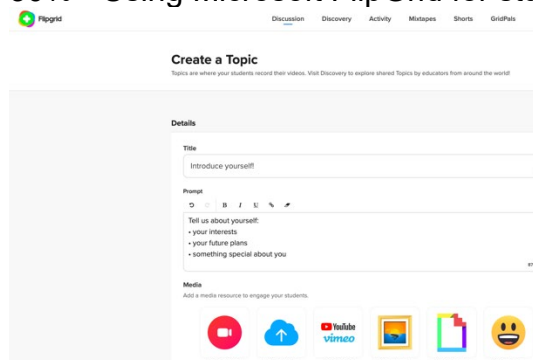Thom Rawson
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Here at Nagasaki International University, we've been developing an on-demand curriculum this fall for English Exercises classes for first-year students. The curriculum consists of the following components based on the English Firsthand series:

30% - Assignments on English Firsthand MyMobileWorld

30% - Using Microsoft FlipGrid for student practice videos from English Firsthand
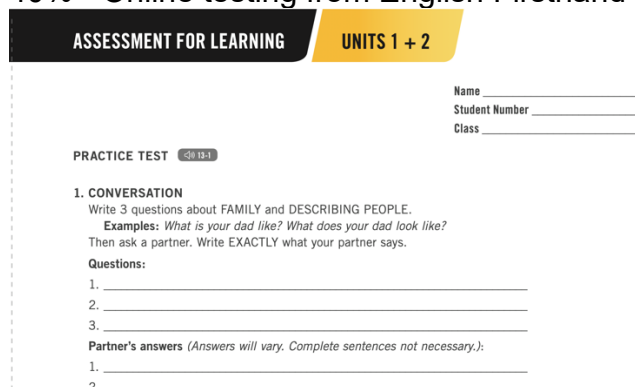
40% - Online testing from English Firsthand practice tests & FlipGrid videos

Basically, these English Exercises classes are focused on English listening and speaking. While asking students to do listening online is fairly straightforward, we didn't have an effective way of getting students to practice the different speaking activities available in the textbook. My colleagues and I came up with a plan to make students create FlipGrid videos using contents from each particular unit (Here's a sample tutorial for teachers on how to use FlipGrid).

 Our curriculum works like this:

Each unit is broken into two classes. In the first class, we cover the vocabulary from the unit and the listening activity.

Class 1

The end of the class has the students create a FlipGrid video which either asks questions or makes statements using the grammar points from the unit.

In the second class, we review the vocabulary, then cover the language check and the real stories activities. Finally, the FlipGrid assignment has students respond to the videos made in the previous week. Students either answer the questions from their classmates or respond to the statements made by their classmates in 5 or more response videos.

Class 2

We connected MyMobileWorld to our university's Moodle site using the LTI option. It works very seamlessly.

Name	Tool details		Edit
LTI Enrolment instance defaults(EFHSUO_3152_Mic_1)	Cartridge URL	https://efhonline.english.com/enrol/lti/cartridge.php/522/660aa60da48b4d0622	⚙
	Secret	LGVEoNaeSPpYar6u1nQXBvDMa6noW8eo	
	Registration URL	https://efhonline.english.com/enrol/lti/proxy.php/522/1f22895d4e7ca5fa5fd4d2	
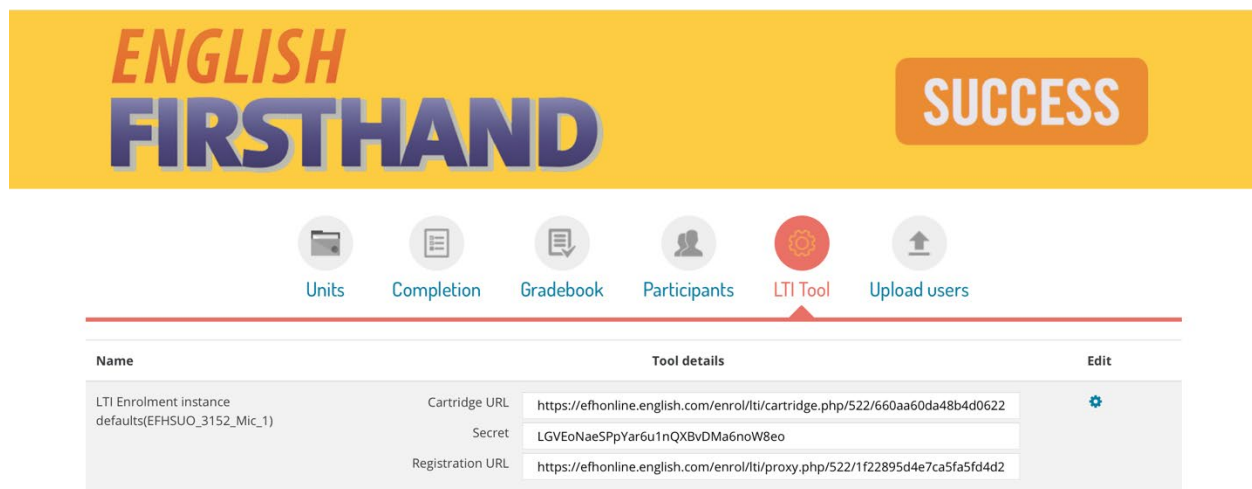
Each class is linked with a corresponding MyMobileWorld course.

These courses are pre-configured with only the relevant activities showing : in our case that is activities for Units 7 to 12 (units 1~6 are hidden using the eye icon) and open and close dates configured to align with our semester schedule. The activities within each pair of units (ie. unit 7&8) roll open when that section is covered and all the activities for the pair of units close one week after the unit test is given. The pairs of units correspond to the two units that are put together for each practice test in the back of each of the books. In the fall, we teach the 2nd 1/2 of the textbooks -- so pair units are Unit 7&8, Unit 9&10, and Unit 11&12.

All the instructions for these lessons are made using on-demand videos.
Here is a sample introduction video link for a class.

The videos explain clearly in both English and Japanese what steps the students need to take for each part of the lesson. We even have guidance for completing the corresponding MyMobileWorld activities with breaks in the video lectures to allow students time to do the activities. By watching the set of videos for each week, we can "track" the attendance of the students using the Moodle "completion tracking" system.

When students view a video, it marks the video as viewed (no, we can't prove they watched the entire video). Once the first video is viewed, the second video opens, and so on. The FlipGrid activities don't open until the last video for each week is viewed.

To support students' learning, we open a live online conference room (using Moodle's BigBlueButton) where students can go during the scheduled class time to get assistance if they need it. Most of the students seem OK with the on-demand video guidance, but we have had a few technical inquiries.

So far, it has been very successful in most of our classes -- we are running this in 9 different classes with three English Firsthand textbooks depending on the level. Our advanced students use EF1, our standard students use EFS, and our basic level students (very low-level groups) are using EFA. There is a good uptake on the MyMobileWorld activities in the advanced levels and standard levels. However, in the low-level classes, about half of the students are struggling primarily because a lot of them failed to purchase the textbook and cannot access MyMobileWorld. We've worked hard to address this problem, but it is a systemic one that has nothing to do with being on-demand. This is typical even in our live classes, though, so it isn't something related to being online vs. being live.

*If you want to use MyMobileWorld, please make sure your students get **Student Book with MyMobileWorld**. Here is component information about English Firsthand.