USING HOT POTATOES IN LISTENING SKILLS

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Abstract

This paper presents practical techniques for creating Web-based listening comprehension quizzes and crosswords. This application uses HOT POTATOES from Half-Baked Software Inc. Using this program, teachers are able to form interactive Web-based exercises. These exercises can be worked individually on computers or via internet using a web browser. Although the internet language is used to form the program as teachers we do not need to know that language as we are just users. Our task is only to enter the data and decide how it should look on the page.

Key Words: Listening skills, JQuizzes, JCrosswords, Jcloze, Jmatch, Jquiz, Jcross, and Jmix Hot Potatoes, CALL

1. Introduction

When one googles the history of computers, it would be easily seen that the search is not for an individual but for the contributors. And the first contributor is Konrad Zuse inventing the first programmable computer in 1936. But the real use of software programs is seen in 1950's. Computers were answering complex business solutions for that time. Although the first use of computers is not that late it was not before 1970's that English language teachers discovered computer use in ELT. The limitations of an effective use of the computers in English language teaching came from the uneducated teachers in the field. As the early years of computer use based on teachers technical and programming language skills, few teachers could be successful in their classrooms. As we can see from the table below, after 1970's, Warschauer divides the development into three periods. The last period shows the cognitive and creative stage in computer assisted language learning. It is a creative stage because teachers do not try to write a software program but using the professionally prepared programs they focus on more to the cognitiveness of the learners. There are programs that teachers can use easily in and out of classrooms. The problem today is not the incapability of teachers to find the right software to use in language classroom but is the ambiguity how to use them. If they can use these programs effectively the students then can build their own explanation of how language works and having discovered the rules, they are more likely to remember and use them through resources on internet. (Yang, 2010)

Table 1 The Development of CALL

Stage	1970s-1980s: Structural/ behavioristic CALL	1980s-1990s: Communicative CALL	21st Century: Integrative CALL
Technology	Mainframe	PCs	Multimedia and Internet
English-Teaching Paradigm	Grammar-Translation & Audio-Lingual	Communicative Language Teaching	Content-Based, ESP/EAP
View of Language	Structural (a formal structural system)	Cognitive (a mentally-constructed system)	Socio-cognitive (developed in social interaction)
Principal Use of Computers	Drill and Practice	Communicative Exercises	Authentic Discourse
Principal Objective	Accuracy	And Fluency	And Agency

Source: (Warschauer, 2000)

One of the computers which can be creatively used by teachers is Hot Potatoes developed by Half-Baked Software Inc. It has five types of interactive web based or non-web based exercises. These are Jcloze, Jmatch, Jquiz, Jcross, and Jmix. In this paper these exercises will be applied for listening skills with examples. Using Hot Potatoes saves teachers' time and contributes to the school curriculum from a different and a more motivating aspect. All learners like it more if the task takes place in a computer. Hot potatoes is a computer program created by the Research and Development team at the University of Victoria, Humanities Computing and Media Centre. It can be downloaded from http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/hcmc/. After that, it has to be installed in the computer. After it is installed, it has to be registered at http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/hotpot/register.htm. It is necessary to register the program so that there are more questions can be created.

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2. Using Hot potatoes in Listening Skills

According to Howatt and Dakin (1974) listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. They add that a person trying to understand the other side should comprehend a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasp his meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously. This skill is so demanding that many teachers even skip listening activities in their classes. In order to help learners to overcome this problem, this article tries to integrate technology into listening skills activities. By doing this aims to motivate the learners and facilitate the listening task to be comprehended. Hot potatoes are used in this study to serve the above mentioned purpose. There are five parts of Hot Potatoes. In this part of the study we will examine each part in details.

2.1 Using Jcloze in Listening skills

Jcloze is a gap fill or cloze exercises. JQuiz exercise can include a limitless number of questions, from four different question types, and each question can contain an unlimited number of correct or incorrect answers. There is also a chance to give feedback for each answer.   Here is the main screen of the program.

Insert graph (1) about here

To start using the program, first enter the title for the jcloze exercise. In our sample exercise, the title is: "Fill in the blanks with the words you hear" After the title, by looking at or listening to the script decide which words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs etc.) you want your learners to focus while they are listening.

After deciding the type of the word, it is the time to enter the text on the Jcloze menu or if you are going to copy the listening text from a webpage as I did, just copy from the web page by using Ctrl+C and paste it by using Ctrl+V keys in Jcloze menu.   One you have entered the text, select the word you want to ask and just click on the gap button underneath the jcloze menu. When you finish forming the cloze test, attach a media file, which is a listening file in our study. Choose 'insert' from the pull down menus and click on the media object. Your exercise is ready. The rest is having fun and adding or removing extras by clicking configure output from options menu. The exercise can be seen offline on a web browser or be uploaded to the www.hotpotatoes.net website by clicking on 'create web page' button on file menu. Below is a sample page appearance in a browser.

Insert graph (2) about here

2.2. Using Jmatch for Listening Skills

Our sample activity is 'listen and put the sentences in order'. The students should be able to put the sentences in order according to their occurrence in the story during or after listening activity. So the steps in preparing the exercise would be;

    a.   Attaching the media file (in our exercise the story 'Harry the dirty Dog' was taken from http://www.storylineonline.net/)
    b.   Number the events as First, second, third etc. or 1, 2, 3 or any type of ordering words.
    c.   Put the title. Our sample exercise's title is "Put the events in order while you are listening."
    d.   *Configure output* from *options* menu to modify color, page design etc.
    e.   Save your file
    f.   *Create a web* page from *file* menu either online or offline.

The task for the student is to drag the right sentence to the right event order.   The menu is shaped as;

Insert graph (3) about here

Insert graph (4) about here

2.3. Using JQuiz in Listening Skills

Jquiz is a hot potato which is used to create question-based quizzes. There can be as many questions as a teacher might like to ask. Using the same listening above we can prepare a Jquiz by asking a question and giving four choices one of which is the correct answer. The procedure is as below:

    a.   Click on JQuiz and write the title.
    b.   Write the question.
    c.   Give four choices.
    d.   Click the correct one as 'correct'
    e.   Give feedback for the wrong answers
    f.   Add the media file (the piece of listening you ask the questions above)

After completing the process the potato will appear as:

Insert graph (5) about here

The potato would be shown in the web browser as:

Insert graph (6) about here

2.4 Using JCross in Listening Skills

Suppose that the students have listened to the story of the dog and you want them to focus on the adjectives and their use. So you can prepare a crossword puzzle in hot potato to make your learners aware of the adjectives. Preparing a crossword puzzle is quite easy in JCross. Just enter the words in grid. It would automatically prepare your puzzle.

Insert graph (7) about here

When you enter the words it will appear on the page as:

Insert graph (8) about here

Now it is the turn to add clues for each word. The JCross is designed in a very practical and instructive way that when the learner clicks on the number of a word in the grid, there appears the clue for that word. After you have finished the page will be in browser as:

Insert graph (9) about here

2.5 Using JMix in Listening Skills

Jmix is the hot potato exercise which a sentence is broken up into separate pieces. To do this, write the parts of the sentence on a different line. For example let us think that we have a sentence in the listening text like; "The cat chased all of the mice." This sentence would be written in Jmix as:

Insert graph (10) about here

Here it is important not to forget to write the correct sentence or sentences which are acceptable on Alternate Sentences line. A second significant issue is to click the "Allow sentences which do not use all words and punctuation in main sentence" button below the Jmix me menu if you accept the sentence with less words. Your Jmix potato would be seen on the web browser as:

Insert graph (11) about here

2.6 Jmasher

Jmasher is the program which compiles all of the potatoes into units and prepares it for a web browser use. With the help of Jmasher you can   link exercises together by using the navigation buttons.
A Jmasher window would be as:

Insert graph (12) about here

And in the browser it would be viewed as it is below.

Insert graph (13) about here

4. Conclusion

This paper tries to explain how we can use technology in English Language teaching and gives an idea to use Hot Potatoes for listening skills. As explained in this paper, e-learning materials can actually be created by anyone, even with a basic knowledge of computer language. The computer program explained here is one of several programs which make the tasks of creating e-learning materials an easy one. This program has been proven user-friendly and can be used by any teacher, even with very little computer skills. The files created are not only interactive but can also be tailored to the materials used by the teachers. In addition, it enables teachers to keep abreast with the development of technology in EFL.

References

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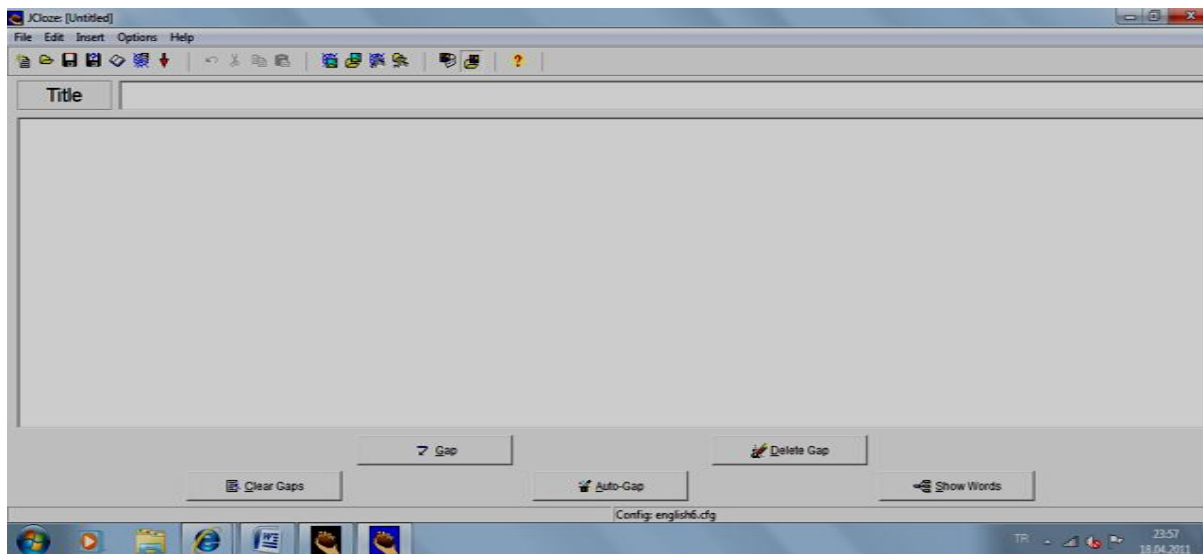The history of computers, (25.02.2011 http://inventors.about.com/library/blcoindex.htm)

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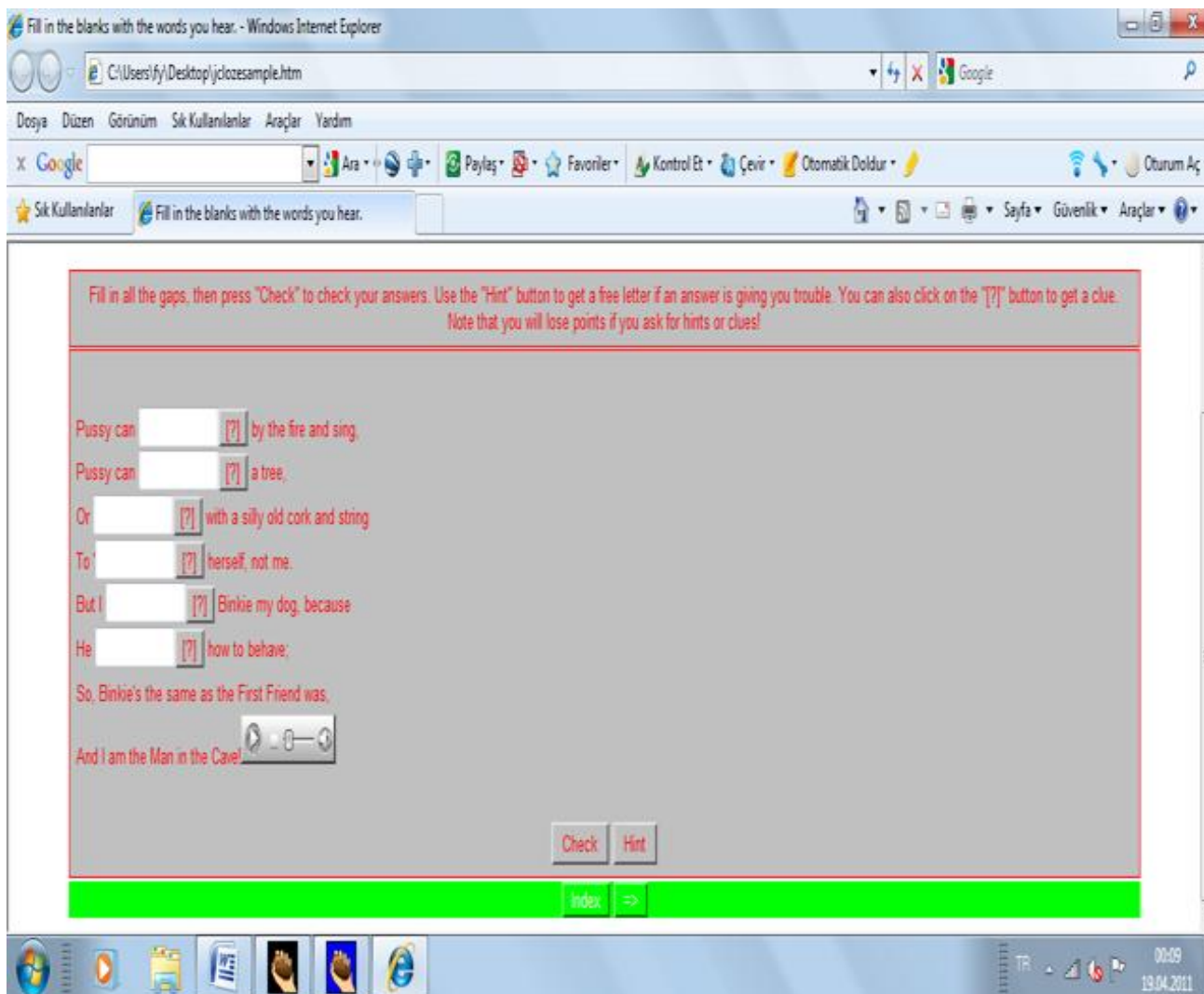
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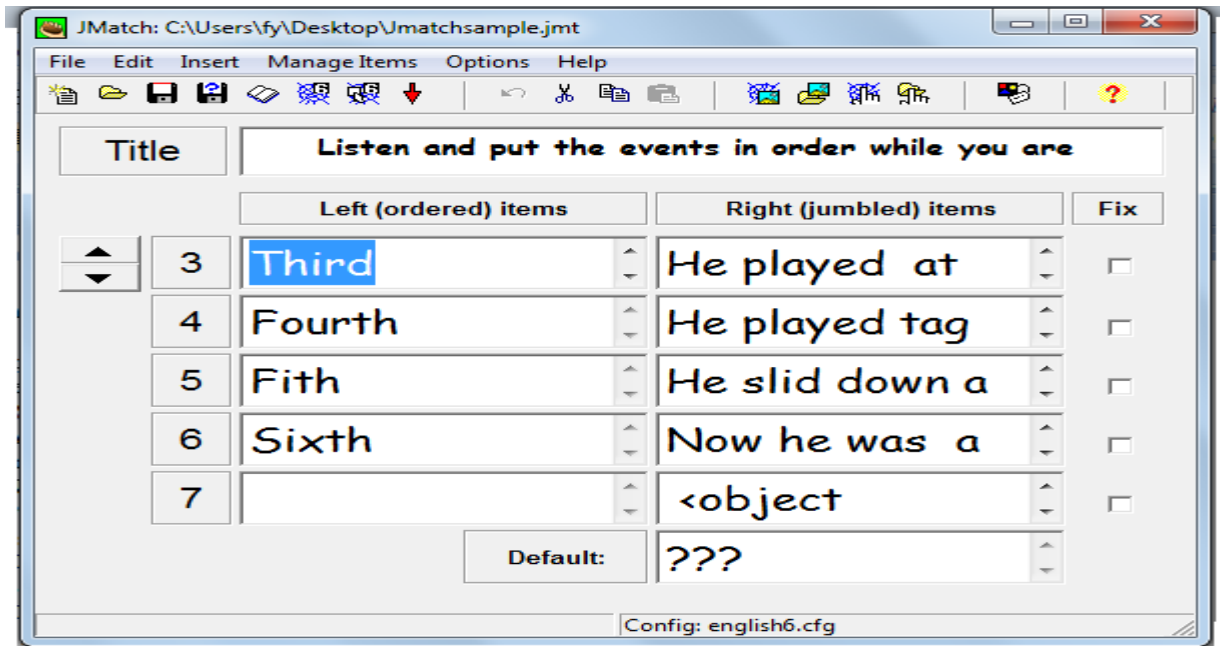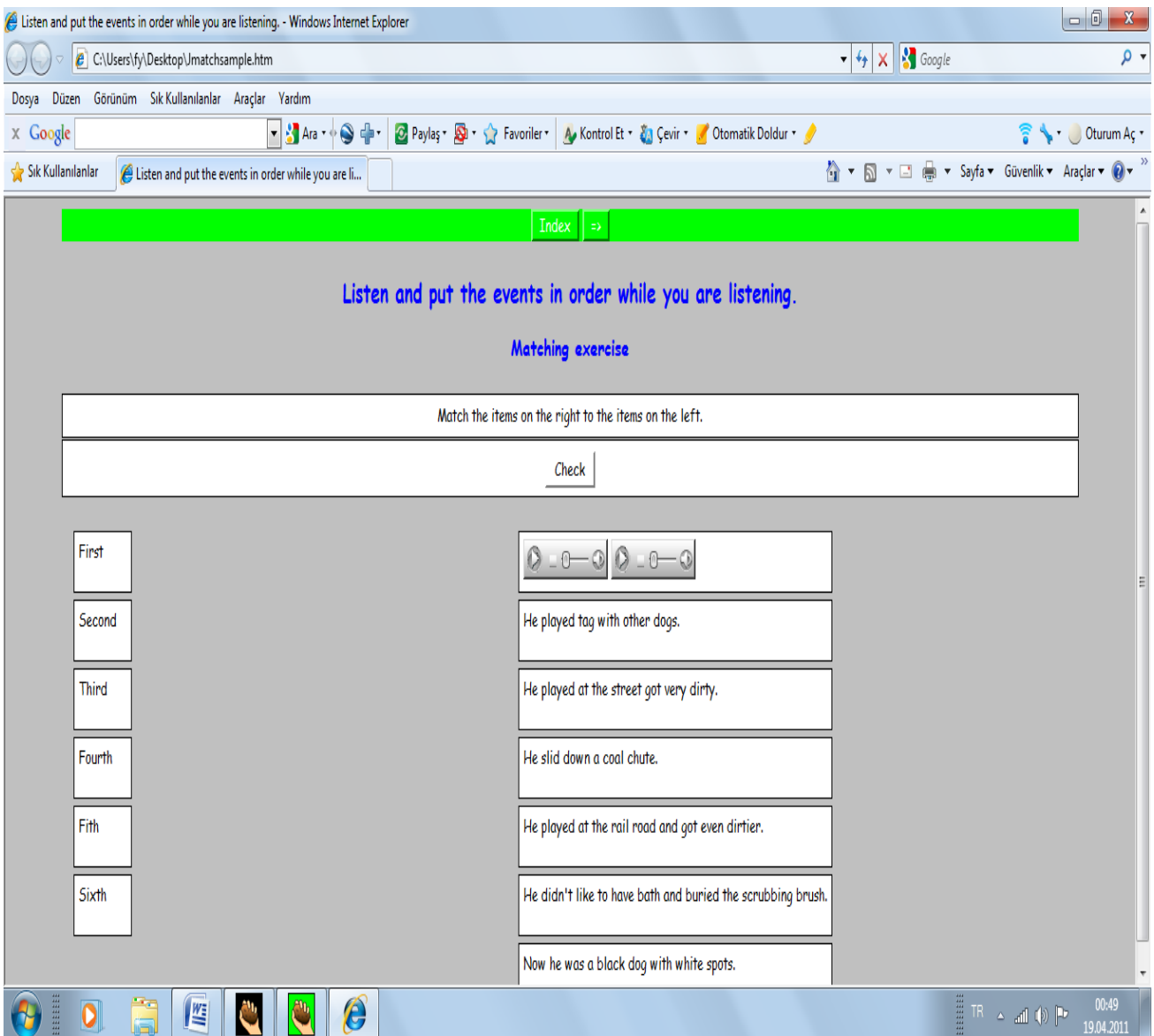
Graph 1 The Main Screen Of JCloze

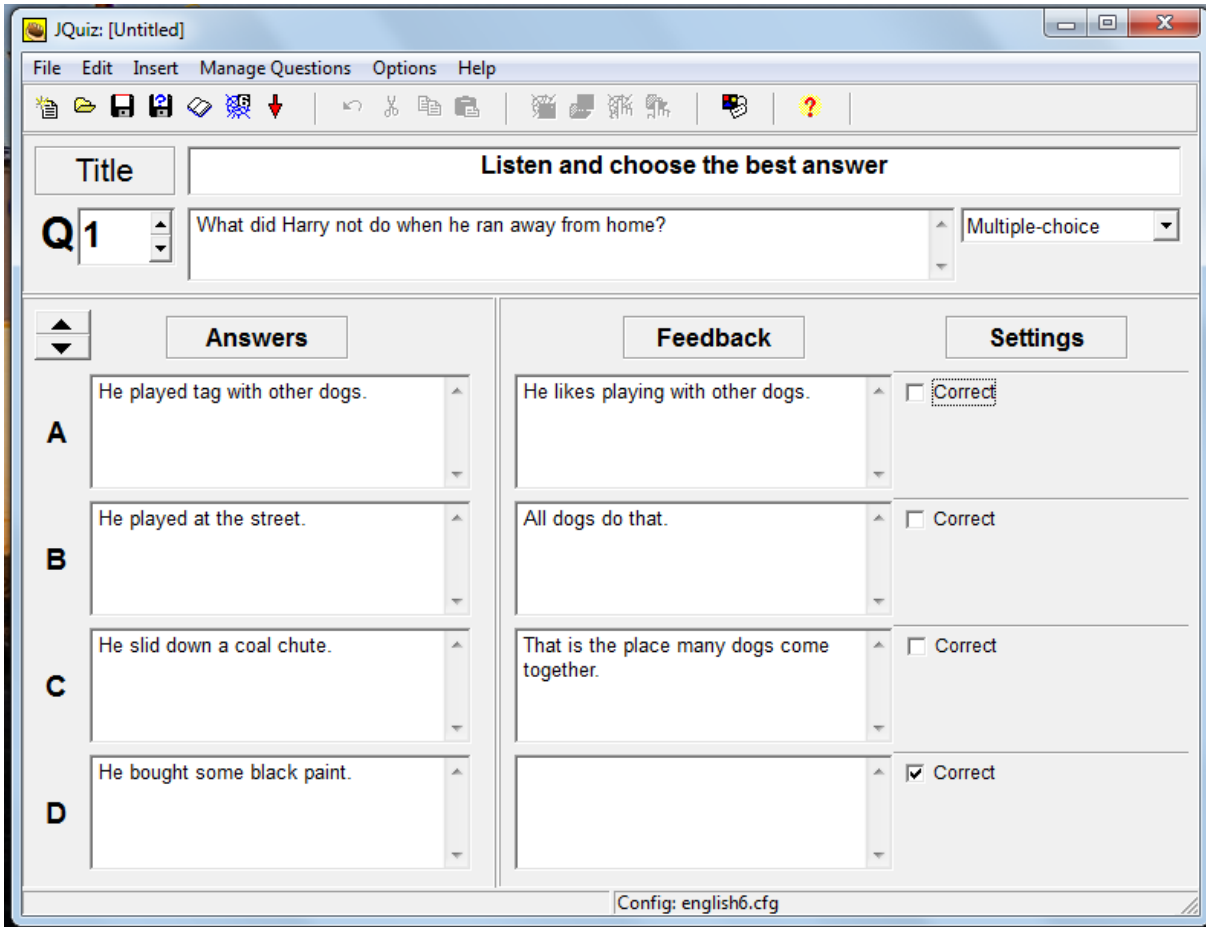**Graph 2- The Prerapared View of JCloze**

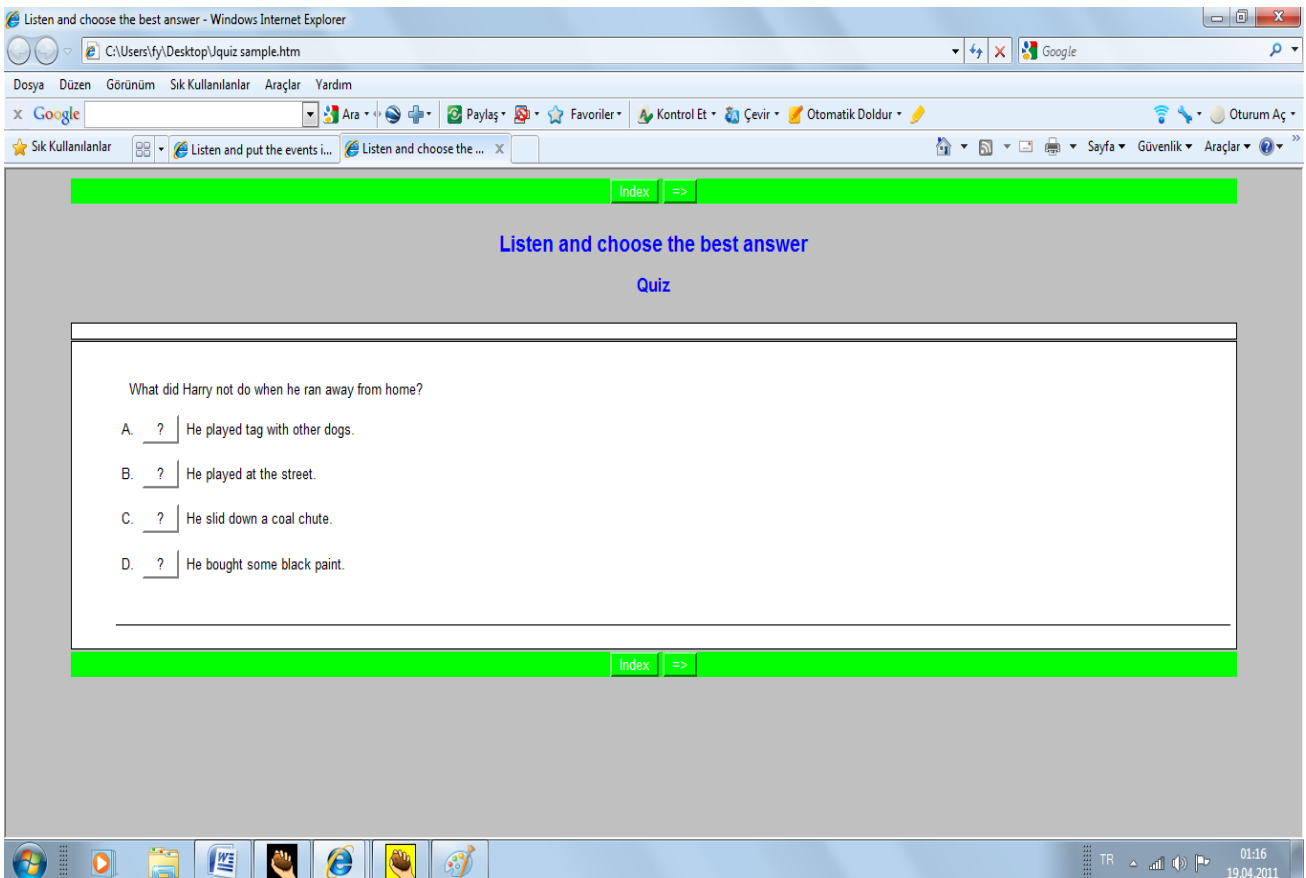**Graph 3- The Appearance of JMatch**

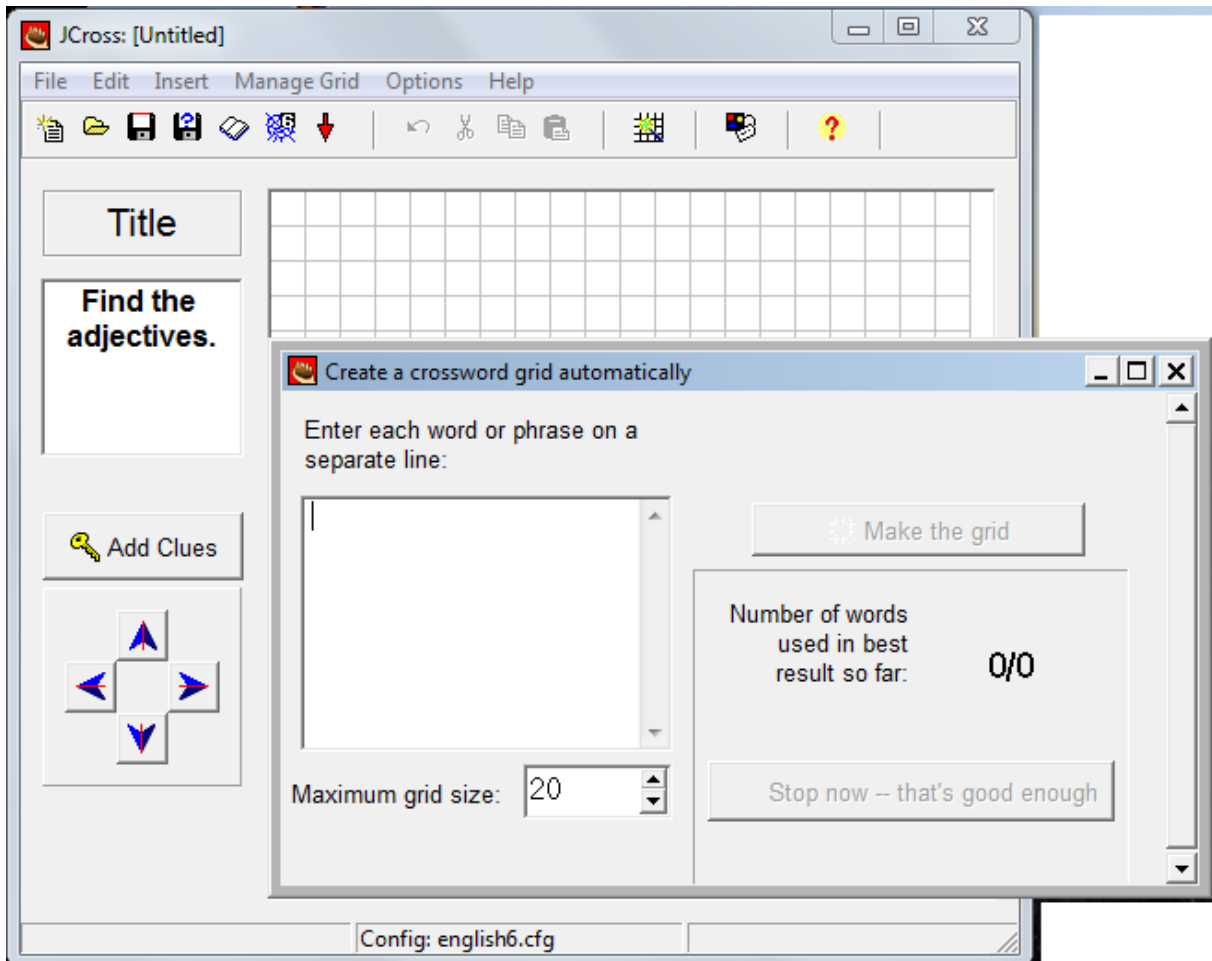**Graph 4- The Browser Appearance of JMatch**
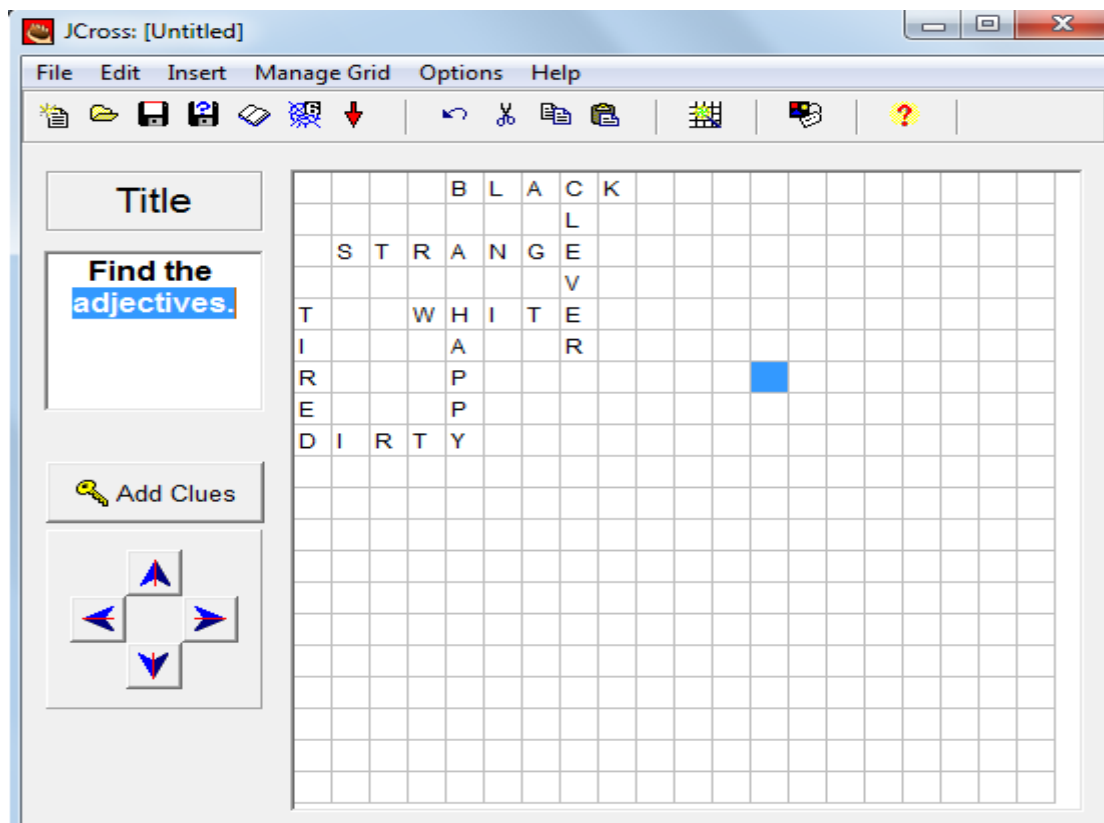
Graph 5- JQuiz Sample

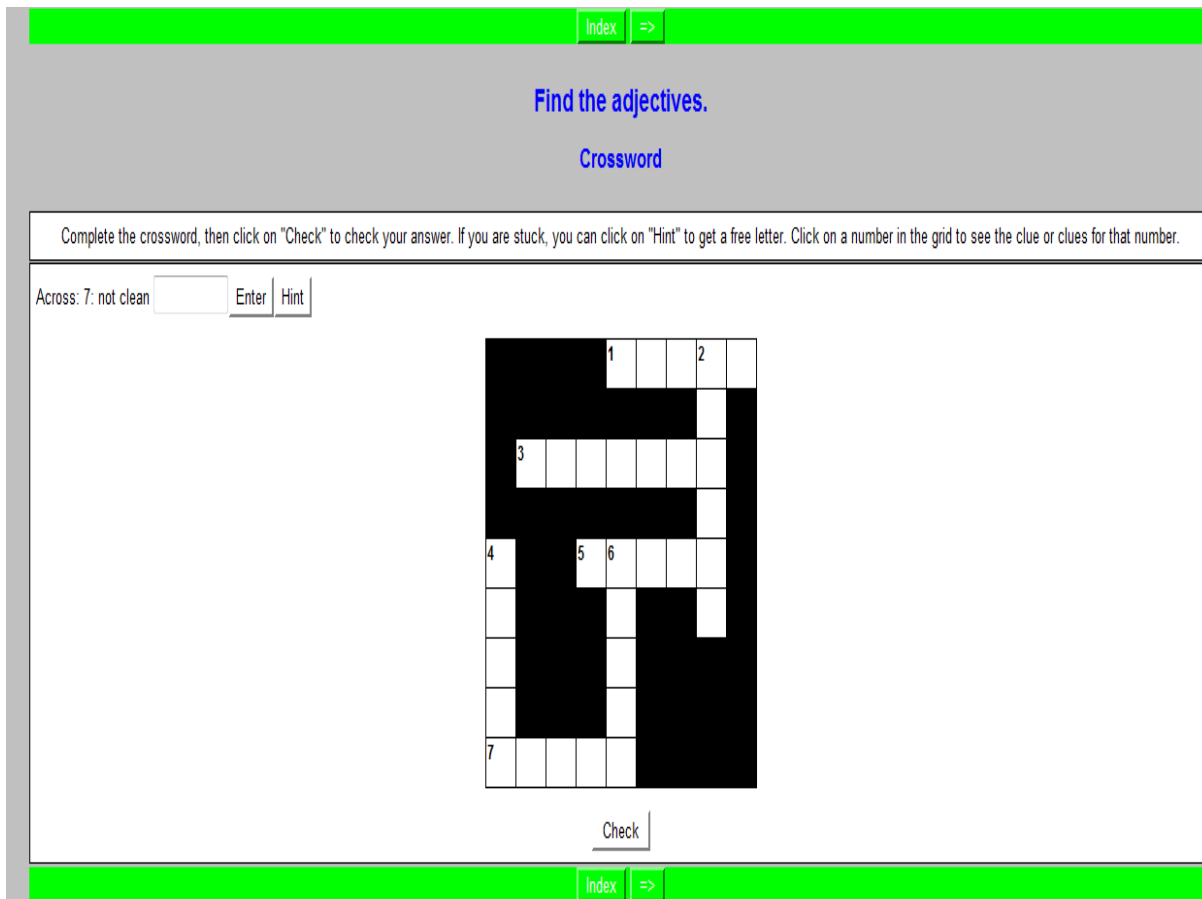**Graph -6 The Appearance Of JQuiz In A Web Browser**
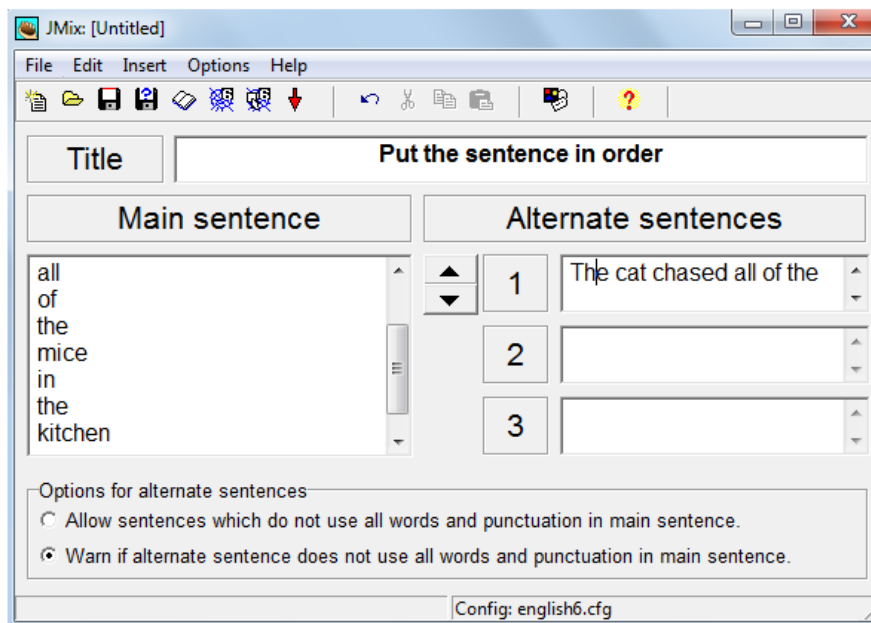
Graph -7 JCross Preparation Grid
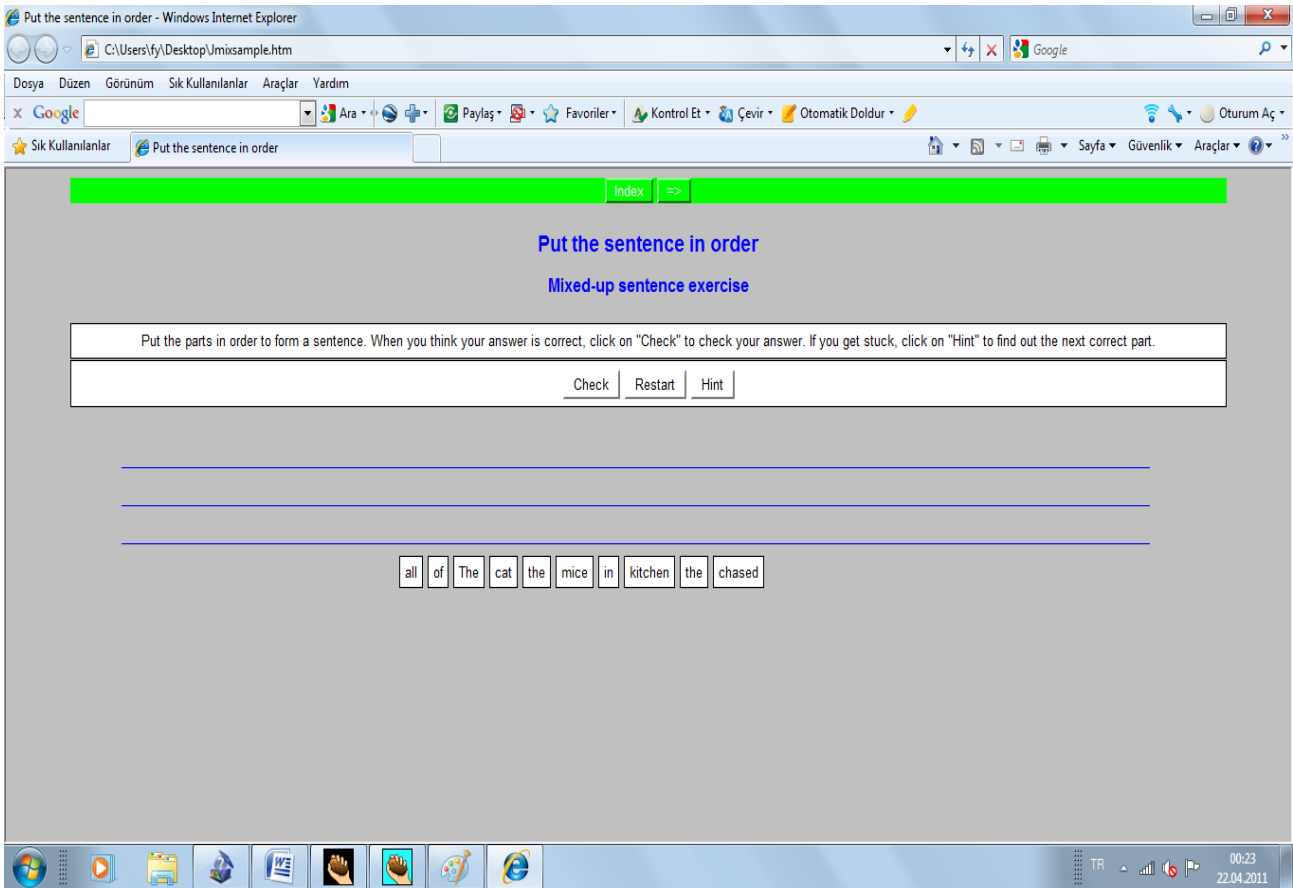

Graph 8- The Appearance of JCross

Graph 9- The Appearance of JCross In A Web Browser
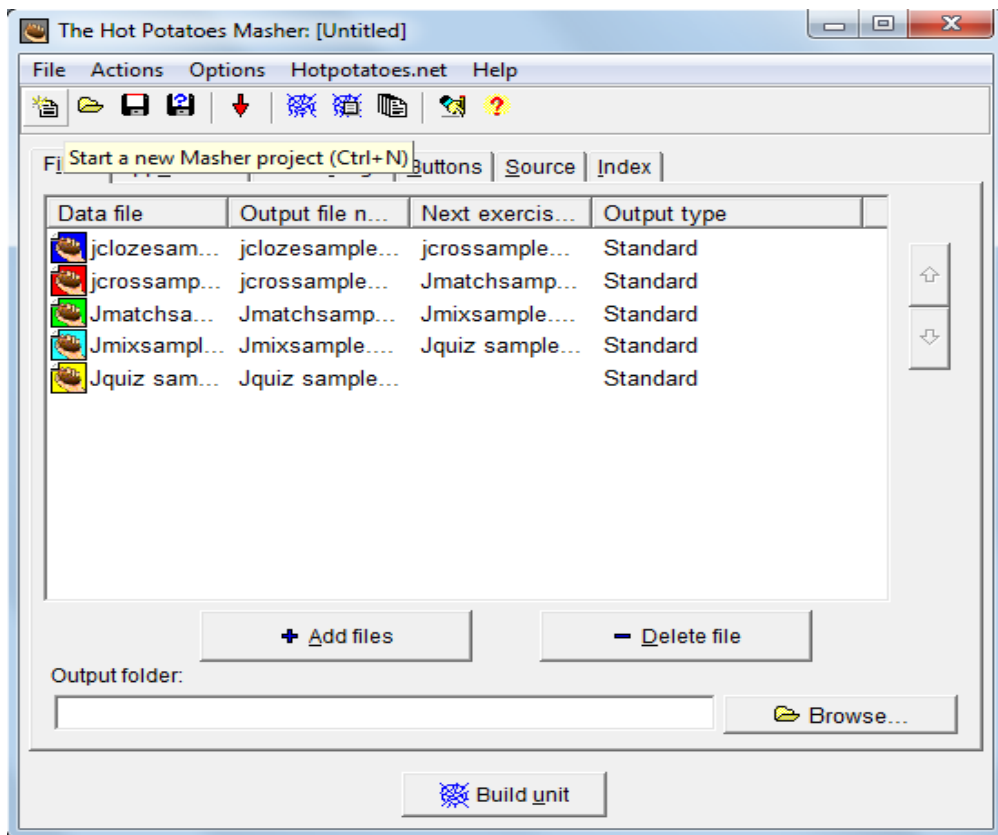

Graph 10- The View Of JMix

Graph 11- The Appearance Of JMix in a Web Browser

Graph 12- JMasher

Graph 13- JMasher In A Web Browser