Using PowerPoint:
Potential Tools for Developing Multi-Media
Self-Access English Study Materials

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Introduction

　　Developing multi-media based English materials has been explored by large commercial publishing companies throughout the world, but it is rare to find materials appropriate to specific needs which teachers seek to meet for particular educational settings and students, such as students at Hokusei Gakuen University.　If individual teachers at Hokusei Gakuen University (later referred to as Hokusei) were able to develop such materials for specific purposes targeting their particular learning environment at Hokusei, it would be ideal. However, it is difficult for an individual teacher to do this because of the shortage of time and knowledge.　In 2007, ten of the English teachers at Hokusei Gakuen University and Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College, including three native speaking teachers, decided to work together to develop such materials by sharing knowledge of computer software applications and their uses in order to reach the objective of context-appropriate materials.

　　This paper will describe how the project team learned to use a computer software

application, PowerPoint, in order to develop such materials. The authors also hope that this will help other teachers to be able to develop multi-media materials to meet the educational needs of students in today's society.

PowerPoint

Animation

The multi-media potential of PowerPoint has been explored by English teachers, (e.g., Eguchi, 2005). It allows one to include pictures, audio files and video clips in the slides, which will be presented or played during a slide presentation. PowerPoint is able to direct learners' attention to specific information by controlling the information presented on slides. For example, this can be done by adding a new piece of information to the slides, on the contrary erasing the existing information from the slide or magnifying particular information and so on. The key function of PowerPoint is called animation.

The users can control the amount of information to be shown at one time and control the timing when new information should be added or erased. This function has many effects on learning. By adding a limited amount of information at one time and adding new information later, learners' top-down processing can be activated (Eguchi, 2005). In language teaching, this function is very valuable not only for the visual effect to keep learners motivated to continue to study, but also for developing necessary skills to understand written and spoken information. In terms of negotiating meaning in comprehension of linguistic information whether spoken or written, learners' active participation in receptive activities, listening and reading, is now considered very important. By limiting information, students can guess what is to be presented next and confirm their guessing later when the information is added. Going through this process similar to the actual language activity in real life can help learners to demonstrate their ability and knowledge gained by studying this kind of material.

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In terms of negotiating meaning in comprehension of linguistic information whether spoken or written, learners' active participation in receptive activities, listening and reading, is now considered very important. By dealing with purposefully limited information, students can guess what is to be presented next and confirm their guesses later when the information is added. Going through this process similar to the actual language activity in real life can help learners to demonstrate their ability and knowledge gained by studying this

Multi-Media Files Insertion Task Flow to Add Animation

[Figure 1] How it looks in a slide show

Task Flow To Use Custom Animation (アニメーションの設定)

[Figure 1.2] Custom Animation (アニメーションの設定)


[Figure 1.3] Custom Animation Task Pane

1. Open Slide Show (スライドショー) from the Menu Bar and select Custom Animation (アニメーションの設定).
2. Select the item on the slide to be animated.
3. Open the Add Effect (効果の追加) drop-down list box and choose Entrance (開始) to add a text box or other pictures or objects to the slide. Choose Exit (終了) to remove them from the slide.

Task Flow to Place Objects in Vertical and Horizontal Lines
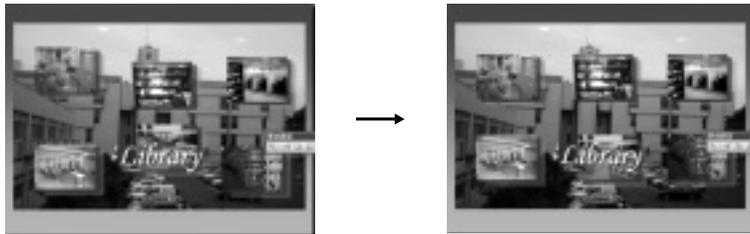
［Figure 2］How to Place Objects in Lines

［Figure 2.1］Alignment

1. Select three objects at top
2. Click **Draw**（図形の調整）, open **Align**（配置・整列）and select **Align Middle**（中央揃え）.
3. Then, select **Distribute Horizontally**（左右に整列）to make the spacing between them even.
4. Place the object on the left side of the bottom line a little further in than the one on the top right.
5. Select the two objects on the left of both the lines and click **Draw**（図形の調整）.　Then open **Align**（配置・整列）and select **Align Left**（左揃え）.
6. Place the object on the right side of the bottom line a little further in than the one on the top left.
7. Select two objects on the right side of both the lines and click **Draw**（図形の調整）.　Then open **Align**（配置・整列）and select **Align Right**（左揃え）.
8. Select the three objects at bottom.
9. Click **Draw**（図形の調整）, open **Align**（配置・整列）and select **Align Middle**（中央揃え）.
10. Then, select **Distribute Horizontally**（左右に整列）to make the spacing between them even.

kind of material.

Designing the layout of the information on each slide is very important (e.g., see pp. 3–4). The readability of the text and students' rate of retention of the new linguistic information are raised by designing the layout nicely (e.g., Smiley, 2005). Limiting the amount of information learners focus on at one time raises the readability. The neatly designed layout of the information on each slide will also help students retain the information presented.

Both of these two types of information control are possible with PowerPoint. Power-Point allows users to put information at any desired place by using the textbox, but it also makes it difficult to design slides neatly at the same time. All the objects and texts should be placed nicely in lines, vertically and horizontally.

Even though many researchers agree that learners should be simply exposed to authentic language use, reading and listening to "acquire language" (Krashen, 1981), researchers emphasize the importance of directing attention to particular language items in order to make learning take place (e.g., Schmidt, 1995). Taking into account the importance of multiple modalities to match individual learning styles, providing multi-media learning materials with visual effects, text information, and audio materials has the advantage of providing more modalities of information processing than just reading materials, such as graded reader series. PowerPoint is a powerful tool for accomplishing this purpose.

Interactive Features—Audio Materials and Subtitles

In teaching listening skills through providing audio materials, there must be an argument about whether it is helpful for developing listening skills to provide written texts of audio materials. Sometimes written scripts in listening interfere with the comprehension solely by listening because learners of a language tend to rely on their better skill, listening or reading, too much to understand what is being said. Many advanced learners of English claim that subtitles for movies or captions on TV interfere with their listening comprehension. It can be suspected that this happens because people in general understand what is being said by decoding linguistic information using both bottom up processing and top-down processing. Bottom up processing is the process of understanding linguistic information by analyzing vocabulary and sentence structure, while top down processing is the process of understanding by guessing and confirming linguistic information by using previous knowledge and context. However, by reading written text while listening, learners tend to rely only on bottom-up processing because they see all the information written and it makes all the information look equally valuable.

Though this might be the case with advanced learners, providing aides to understand what is said is necessary for beginners. PowerPoint provides the choices of whether they see the written text or not (see pp. 6–7), and developing such materials is an alternative which can be chosen at low cost. Having alternatives seems a good solution concerning the argument about whether subtitles have an interruptive effect on understanding of printed text.

Task Flow to Insert Sound from a File
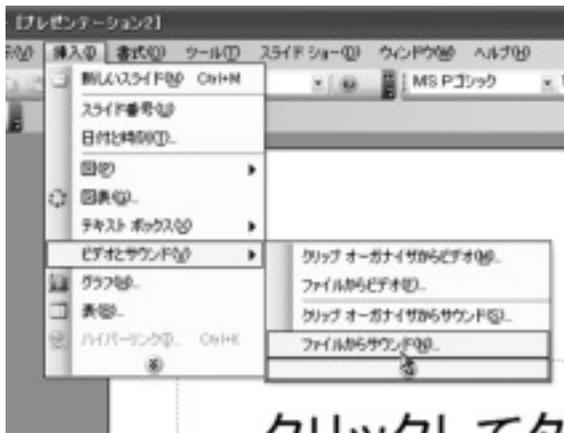
［Figure 3］Insertion of Sound Files

1. Open **Insert**（**挿入**）, choose **Movies And Sounds**（**ビデオとサウンド**）, and click **Sound From File**（**ファイルからサウンド**）.
2. The Insert Sound dialog box will be displayed, as shown in Figure 3.2.

［Figure 3.2］ The Insert Sound Dialog Box

3. Find and select the sound file to add, and click **OK**.　The sound icon will appear in the slide.
4. Drag the icon where you want to have the file on your slide.
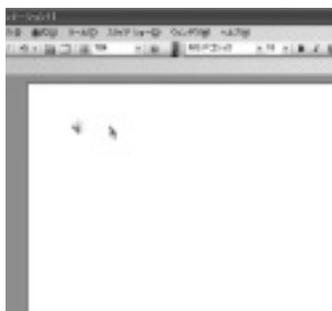
［Figure 3.3］ New Slide

Task Flow to Make Scripts Behave Like Subtitles
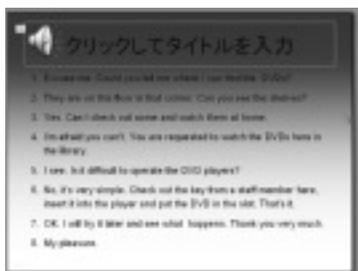
[Figure 4] Subtiles

[Figure 4.1] Custom Animation Pane
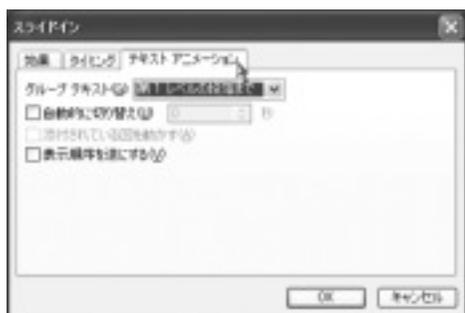
[Figure 4.2] Fly In Dialog Pane

[Figure 4.3] Play Sound Dialog Box

1. Create a text box and press Enter at the end of each dialogue.
2. Select the text box, open **Slide Show（スライドショー）** from menu bar and select **Custom Animation（アニメーションの設定）**.
3. Open the **Add Effect（効果の追加）** drop-down list box and choose **Entrance（開始）**. Choose **Fly in（スライドイン）**.
4. Choose **On Click（クリック時）** from the **Start（開始）** drop-down list, **From Right（右から）** from the **Direction（方向）** drop-down list, and **Very Fast（さらに速く）** from the **Speed（速さ）** list.
5. On the **Custom Animation（アニメーションの設定）** pane, click the effect of the text box, and the down arrow will appear to the right of the animation.
6. Click the down arrow and choose **Effect Options（効果のオプション）**.
7. A dialog box appears with the name of the animation file. Click the Text Animation tab.
8. Open the **Group Text（グループテキスト）** drop-down list and choose **To 1st Level Paragraph（第1レベルの段落まで）**.
9. On the **Custom Animation（アニメーションの設定）** pane, click the effect of the sound file, and the down arrow will appear to the right of the animation.
10. Click the down arrow and choose **Effect Options（効果のオプション）**.
11. When the **Play Sound（再生サウンド）** dialog box opens, click the **Effect（効果）** tab.
12. In the **Stop Playing（再生の中止）** area, choose **After Current Slide（現在のスライドのあと）** and click **OK**.

PowerPoint also provides interactive features for language learning by allowing users to expose written text at the right moment by clicking while audio materials are being played. It also provides a step beginners can use before understanding the material fully. If it provides written text sentence by sentence, it can test whether learners can detect the end of each sentence. Combining a pre-listening activity to provide context to activate learners' schemata with this additional step provides a good alternative way to develop listening skills, as opposed to just testing current comprehension ability. Only listening to audio material doesn't help learners to develop listening skills, but it works for checking current comprehension skills if learners are beginners.

WebTube―Presenting Materials for Self-Access Study

After materials are made, the next step is how they are presented as self-access materials. At Hokusei Gakuen University, when the CALL classrooms were renovated in 2006, LMS (Learning Management Software) called *WebTube*, developed by Hokkai Video©, was installed. It enables teachers to upload any files as teaching materials, including PowerPoint slides, and to make many types of questions, such as multiple choice or cloze questions. So, WebTube is a good means of presenting materials to students. How to use WebTube is beyond the scope of this paper, but the software is quite intuitive. An English user's manual for this software was developed as a part of this project. For more details, please contact a teacher CALL advisor or CALL Support Desk at Hokusei Gakuen University.

Conclusion

PowerPoint is a powerful tool for teaching English. Combining animation resources elaborately, it even enables teachers to explain the linguistic concepts different in English from Japanese, such as present perfect, visually and in ways which appeal to learners' instincts. But many teachers seem to use this software only as a prompter in their lectures and provider of written information. In this project, we have shared the knowledge of this software and explored the possible use of this powerful tool to develop multi-media materials. This software helps learners to develop listening comprehension skills by providing additional steps between listening to the audio materials and checking the comprehension.

It is very important for English teachers to work together and help each other to learn to use this kind of software. It is a time-consuming task to learn how to use computer software only by oneself. This project has been a great opportunity to share and explore knowledge.

Acknowledgement

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[Abstract]

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This paper describes how to use PowerPoint for developing multi-media self-access English study materials. It argues for the usefulness of this software in developing multi-media self-access study materials by supporting its features from current second language acquisition theories. Discussion includes the importance of layout to raise readability of the text, the importance of attention in learning a second language, and the role of top-down processing in comprehension. The key feature of the software is animation, which provides interactive functions designed to enhance English language acquisition when used extensively. This paper also describes how to present such materials for the students at Hokusei Gakuen University.