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著者	MATSUNE, Mark
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# Recorded Narration in Student PowerPoint Presentations<sup>1</sup>

Mark MATSUNE

## 1. Introduction:

Until recently, teachers have used PowerPoint in the classroom predominantly as a teaching tool. Now PowerPoint presentations are also becoming increasingly utilized as a learning tool for students in many subject areas. This paper will describe a student self-introduction presentation activity using PowerPoint. At the beginning of many elementary level English courses, a common activity is to go through self-introductions in some shape or form. This paper will outline the procedure, technical aspects, class time management benefits, and further applications for one variation of this type of activity.

In this instructor's "English for Commerce" course the activity was done by asking students to prepare a narrated 12-15 slide PowerPoint presentation. The self-introduction activity described here uses the narration recording feature in PowerPoint which allows instructors to manage their class time more efficiently particularly when evaluating conventional student presentations. As many students, particularly non-English majors, are nervous about giving a live oral presentation in English especially at the beginning of a course, this pre-recorded format minimizes the initial fear to speak in English in front of an audience of their classmates. Furthermore, from this instructor's past experiences with class sizes of 25 or more students, presenting and watching a full class set of individual student presentations requires a considerable amount of lesson time and the students sometimes lose interest in watching some of their classmates after the first few presentations are complete. The recorded narration of the PowerPoint presentations diminishes this reaction, by allowing the students to select the presentations they would like to see and evaluate. From a classroom management perspective this recorded format significantly decreased the amount of lesson time required to present and watch all the presentations. As a result, the time saved can be

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utilized by the students in other learning activities.

## **2. PowerPoint Introduction Presentation Requirements:**

### **2.1 Course Background:**

The English for Commerce course is offered to students in the Faculty of Economics. Students enrolled in this course generally have an elementary proficiency level in English. This 4-skills course was focused primarily on developing the students' Business English proficiency as well as their overall computer and information literacy skills. Due to the nature of this course, the PowerPoint presentations were one of the reoccurring project components throughout the academic year. This type of activity offered students opportunities for independent study and generally allowed them to work at their own pace. Students progressed on to making longer live content-based presentations later in the course.

### **2.2 Presentation Description:**

First, students were shown an example presentation from a previous year's class. The students were then given an outline of the PowerPoint presentation requirements.

- 1) Basically, they were asked to prepare a slideshow that included 11 or more slides which corresponded to a script template provided by the instructor (Refer to **Appendix 1**). To further assist the students, a model script example was also provided along with the script template. The students were encouraged to diverge from the template if they wanted to include additional content or information.
- 2) Students were required to include five or more graphic images (JPEG, GIF, etc.). If the students used images taken from the Internet, they were required to cite them with the URL of the web site source.
- 3) Students were also encouraged to include Slide Show features such as animation (text or graphic movement) or original drawings, but were warned to avoid overuse.
- 4) The primary component of the presentation was the narration which the students recorded for each of the slides from their prepared script.
  - i) The students were warned that if the narration was inaudible or unclear, there would be penalties in their project grade.
  - ii) In general, it was observed that most students opted to re-record each slide numerous times to achieve the desired intonation, pronunciation and timing.
- 5) Students were also required to save a copy of their PowerPoint presentation into a USB memory stick provided by the instructor for his later evaluation after the "in class" peer

evaluations were complete.

- 6) Due to the limited number and capacity of the USB memory sticks, students were asked to limit their PowerPoint files to less than 7 MB with the preferred file size being between 3 MB to 5 MB.

### **2.2.1 Script Drafting and Revisions:**

Students submitted a first draft of their script to the instructor for correction. The students then made the suggested revisions prior to recording their narration. The revised script was submitted together with the PowerPoint file at the completion of the project.

### **2.2.2 PowerPoint Slide Show:**

While the script drafting was being done outside of class time, the students started creating their slide show in class. This process began with a demonstration of basic PowerPoint skills and continued with interactive training as the students made their slide shows. One class session was allotted for this instructional step. Refer to **Appendix 2** for an example slide show of the self-introduction presentation. Through experimentation and self-discover the students generally proceeded smoothly through this phase of the project. The instructor's role was mainly to provide technical assistance and aesthetic advice on the slide design or layout.

Students were given five basic guidelines for constructing their PowerPoint Slideshow.

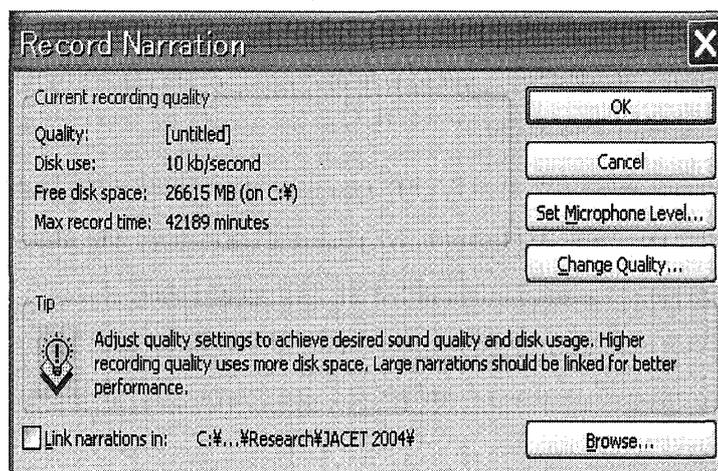
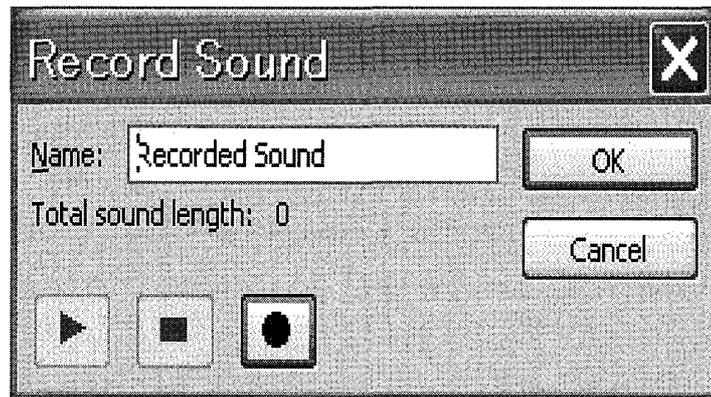
- a) First, they were shown how to add new slides to their slide show presentation.
- b) The students then were shown how to select an appropriate design theme for the presentation. Some students maintained one theme for their whole slide show while others combined various themes.
- c) Next, they were shown how to choose an appropriate design layout for each of the individual slides. As this particular project did not involve any statistical data, the layout was generally limited to simple text and graphics.
- d) They were shown how to copy and insert graphic images into their slides. They were advised to avoid excessive use of graphical elements and to keep the slides clear and simple with limited text.
- e) Finally, students were instructed to set the narration recording, all animation, and slide transitions to start automatically when each slide was shown. This was required so that the peer graders would not have to guess and or take additional time to navigate

through each slide. There was a grade penalty if the narration, animation or slide transitions required manual clicking to activate each component in a given slide.

### 2.2.3 Recording the Narration in the Slide Show

As many students, particularly non-English majors, are often nervous about giving a live oral presentation in English particularly at the beginning of a course, this pre-recorded format minimized the initial fear to speak in English in front of an audience of their classmates. This activity was found to be a good springboard to ease the students into making live presentations later in the course.

Inserting the narration can be done in two ways. One way is the use the “Record Sound” feature found in the “Insert” menu. This function presents a simple recording window with “Play”, “Stop” and “Record” buttons along with a time counter.



An alternative method is to use the “Record Narration” feature found in the “Slide Show” menu. This feature allows for continuous recording through the complete slide show. In this project the “Record Sound” feature was used because the students could more easily control the playback and re-recording of their narration for each individual slide.

### 3. Classroom Management Using Narrated PowerPoint Presentations

In this activity, once the students had completed recording their presentations, only a single follow-up lesson was required for them to do peer evaluations of a selected number of their classmates’ slide shows. The students could individually view and evaluate the slide shows of various classmates simultaneously. After viewing a classmate’s presentation, the students moved on to another person’s computer. In this way all the students were continually moving from one presentation to the next. The narrated PowerPoint presentation format reduced the “repetitiveness factor” that sometimes affects the students’ attention spans when they are required to be the audience and evaluate student presentations for a full class in the conventional way.

Students were required to complete a simple evaluation for five or six other students during the allotted 90 minutes of class time. Students were also encouraged to discuss or ask questions to their classmates about their presentations. Shown below is an example of the peer evaluation scoring sheet completed by the students for each presentation they viewed.

**Peer PowerPoint Presentation Evaluation**  
**Presenter’s Name:**

Peer Evaluation	Score
English Fluency Clarity, Vocabulary, Grammar, etc. (5)	
English Content (Interesting Information) (10)	
Voice Expression (5)	
Slideshow Content (5)	
Slideshow Navigation (5)	
<b>Total: (30)</b>	
Comments: (20+ words)	

After the students had completed their peer evaluations, they were collected and collated for each individual student. An average score from the peer evaluations was used to determine 50% of the student's project grade. The remaining 50% was based on the instructor's evaluation using similar criteria. The anonymous peer evaluations and feedback comments were then returned to the individual students, along with a combined grade based on both the peer and instructor's scoring.

#### **4. Observations:**

The shortened amount of class time involved in viewing each students' presentations, not only reduced the tendency for students to become bored, but it also required them to view their classmates' presentations in a proactive matter. This interactive atmosphere resulted in increased student satisfaction and motivation.

A summary of the difference in class time allotted for viewing conventional live presentations versus the peer evaluation of the PowerPoint presentations with recorded narration is shown below.

- 1) Conventional Individual Student Presentation Format
  - a) (30 students X 10 minutes = 5+hours of class time)
  
- 2) Peer Evaluations of Narrated PowerPoint Presentations
  - a) 1 lesson (90 minutes of class time)
  - b) Students evaluate five or six presentations each.

Peer evaluations have been shown to have a positive influence on student learning. As students are exposed to errors made by their classmates, they become more sensitive to errors in their own writing and speaking. With continued practice they develop more confidence and objectivity in both peer and self evaluation. The narrated format of the presentations also facilitated opportunities for the students to review portions of the presentations more than once. Students were often observed discussing or clarifying the contents of various presentations as they proceeded from one presentation to the next.

There were also some of the surprising observations from the peer evaluations. First, it was impressive that the students approached the peer evaluations in a highly objective manner. Known friendships or cliques did not seem to be reflected in the peer evaluation

scoring. The instructor had been concerned about the possibility that some students would only view and evaluate their friends' presentations, but this potential problem did not occur. Since the class of 28 students was instructed to complete at least five or six evaluations within the single class period, the students were diligent about proceeding quickly to unoccupied classmates' computers. Furthermore, it appeared that students generally maintained consistency in their grading from presentation to presentation regardless of their preexisting relationships. While there was an obvious subjective element in the evaluations for both the students and the instructor, the average of the students' combined evaluations and the instructor's scoring were found to be consistent with each other. In fact, in some cases, the students' evaluations were actually more critical than those of the instructor.

Introducing this type of project and the subsequent peer evaluation at the beginning of the course, offered the students two valuable experiences. First, it helped students to develop confidence in their English presentation skills. Second, it helped them to develop ability and confidence to objectively assess their peers' work. By being exposed to both strong and weak features in their peers' projects, the students gained an awareness which they could apply to their own future assignments. While there are potential complications with empowering students with the responsibility of peer evaluation, helping students develop objective and critical assessment skills improves classroom management and is beneficial to the students' own learning.

## **5. Conclusion:**

While the narrated PowerPoint projects obviously reduce the class time required to view the student presentations, the 50% weighting of the instructor's evaluation still had to be done outside of class, therefore the instructor may actually be spending more time to evaluate the projects using this method. Again the primary benefit is that the class time typically taken to watch everyone's individual presentations can be dramatically reduced and used for other activities.

The self-introduction presentations themselves gave students exposure to their peers' backgrounds, interests and personalities. It is said that the language, itself, should be meaningful to the learners in order to promote learning. The language required in the self-introduction PowerPoint presentation appears quite suitable for meeting the conditions of this type of learning environment. This content was both authentic and intellectually stimulating. In addition, it fostered a supportive learning environment which could be developed further as the semester progressed. (Becker & Ravitz, 1999). This initial Power-

Point presentation with recorded narration provided an unthreatening introduction to making presentations. It also eased the progression to subsequent live student PowerPoint presentations and group discussions which followed later in the course.

As basic computer and information literacy are now standard requirements in all faculties at Hokkai Gakuen University, utilizing PowerPoint presentations as a learning tool for students in many subject areas is growing. This paper has presented a procedure, some technical aspects, and class time management benefits to encourage teachers to use this type of activity in suitable courses. As students are becoming increasingly computer and IT literate prior to entering university, the use of PowerPoint and other software applications in the classroom is becoming easier. Furthermore, the utilization of these tools presents a wide range of options for content-based learning in a variety of subject areas.

In terms of language learning this project and format proved successful. Student feedback has shown this project to be a motivating factor in the students' EFL studies, as well as a practical opportunity for the students to improve their overall computer literacy. In a follow-up survey a significant number of students commented that the computer and Internet related English that they encountered and learned through this project enabled them to become more technically efficient in their studies in other subject areas. While seemingly simplistic to those teachers with greater computer savvy, this student PowerPoint project was a rewarding teaching and learning endeavor for both the students and their instructor.

In addition, the PowerPoint Presentation enabled students to use English in an unthreatening manner of communication. It encouraged the students to become more aware of their potential audience. The recorded narration also offered the flexibility of being used easily with students of varying levels, interests and goals. It enabled students to individualize their studies to a greater extent and therefore become more independent learners.

To summarize, this writer feels that the student PowerPoint presentations using recorded narration gave students a motivating and confidence building learning experience. It also helped to further develop the students' evaluation skills. The initial presentation serves as an effective stepping stone to subsequent live content-based presentations. By utilizing the narration feature in PowerPoint, students were able to successfully complete their first presentations in a non-threatening format. In addition, the peer evaluations could be conducted in a manner, which was more time efficient in terms of class time allotment than conventional class presentations. This project format served as a useful classroom management tool for typical language classes.

### References:

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## Appendix 1: Script Template

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Self-introduction using PowerPoint

Slide	Script
Name: _____ Faculty of _____ Hokkai Gakuen University	(30 + words) Hello, everyone. My name is. . . I am a. . .
Special Interests (1) (2) (3)	Now, let me talk about my interests. I would like to mention three things that I like.
(1)	(30 + words) First of all, I like
(2)	(30 + words) I also like
(3)	(30 + words) My third interest is in
Hometown	(20 + words) Now, let me talk about my hometown. I grew up in
(1) Population + Other Information	(50 + words) There are about _____ residents in _____
(2) Popular Food	(30 + words) _____ is famous for
(3) Popular Places to Visit	(80 + words) If you have a chance to go to _____, you should visit the following places. First, you should definitely try to go to  You should also try
I am...	(50 + words) Before I conclude my self-introduction, let me tell you about (other)
Thank you!	This is the end of my self-introduction. Thank you very much.

## Appendix 2: Example Self-introduction Slide Show

**Introduction**

XXX Hidetoshi

Faculty of Business  
Administration  
Hokkai-Gakuen University

**Special Interests**

Photography...  
Bicycle...  
Computer...

**Photography**

Live in New York  
Learn about Photography



**Cycling**

Ride a Bicycle makes me relaxed.



**Computers**

I am Computer GEEK...  
GEEK = OTAKU



**My Hometown**

Teine



Live Camera  
[http://www.city.sapporo.jp/teine/flash/live\\_com/vlivev.htm](http://www.city.sapporo.jp/teine/flash/live_com/vlivev.htm)

**Population**

Population = 135,000  
SAPPORO-City = 7%

**Popular Places to Visit**



Mt. Teine

**Popular Foods**

No popular food in Teine  
SAPPORO RAMEN Noodle



**My work**



Flower 2003.

**My work**



->night 2003

**Thank you!!!**

All photographs  
XXX Hidetoshi 2001-2003.

Thank you for listening...