

Using Audio Presentations with International Distance Learners

Talking About... Learning and Teaching: Technology for Instruction Case Study 007

University of Birmingham

Programme of Study:
International MScs in DL

Modules: Research
Methods

Discipline: International
Development

Start Date for audio: 2011

Students: between 25
and 35 students for each
module

Type: Distance

Technology: Camtasia
Studio 7, WebCT

Approach: eLearning,

Assessment Link: n/a

Rationale

The use of audio or voice over presentations with online programmes caters for different types of learners and allows students to relate more to what is being presented.

Practice

The production of voice over on PowerPoint presentations using Camtasia Studio 7 – easy to use, easy to edit and created at your desk.

E-Learning Advantage

The use of multi-media increases variety of material and can be more engaging to certain types of learner.

Key Points for Effective Practice and Barriers

Audio presentations can be easy to create but care has to be taken in editing – to ensure that any heavy breathing, and filler words (e.g. 'er', 'um') are removed. Sitting too close to the mic can also distort the sound.

With an international audience (particularly students with English as a second language), it is important to speak clearly. It is also important not to sound as if the script is being read – as this can be deadly boring and totally defeat the purpose of the exercise.

Some students might have difficulty listening to the presentation. In order to cater for everyone it might be advisable to offer an alternative: the same PowerPoint presentation but with notes which cover roughly what is being said in the audio.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Blackboard Learning System. The page title is 'Social Sciences' and the user is in 'Student View'. The main content area is titled 'An introduction to dissertations' and contains three links with icons: 'An introduction to dissertations' (audio presentation), 'Dissertations Introduction' (audio presentation), and 'Conceptual frameworks' (Powerpoint slides). The browser address bar shows 'http://bham.blackboard.com/webct/cobalt/1ainFrame.doweibct'.

Conclusion

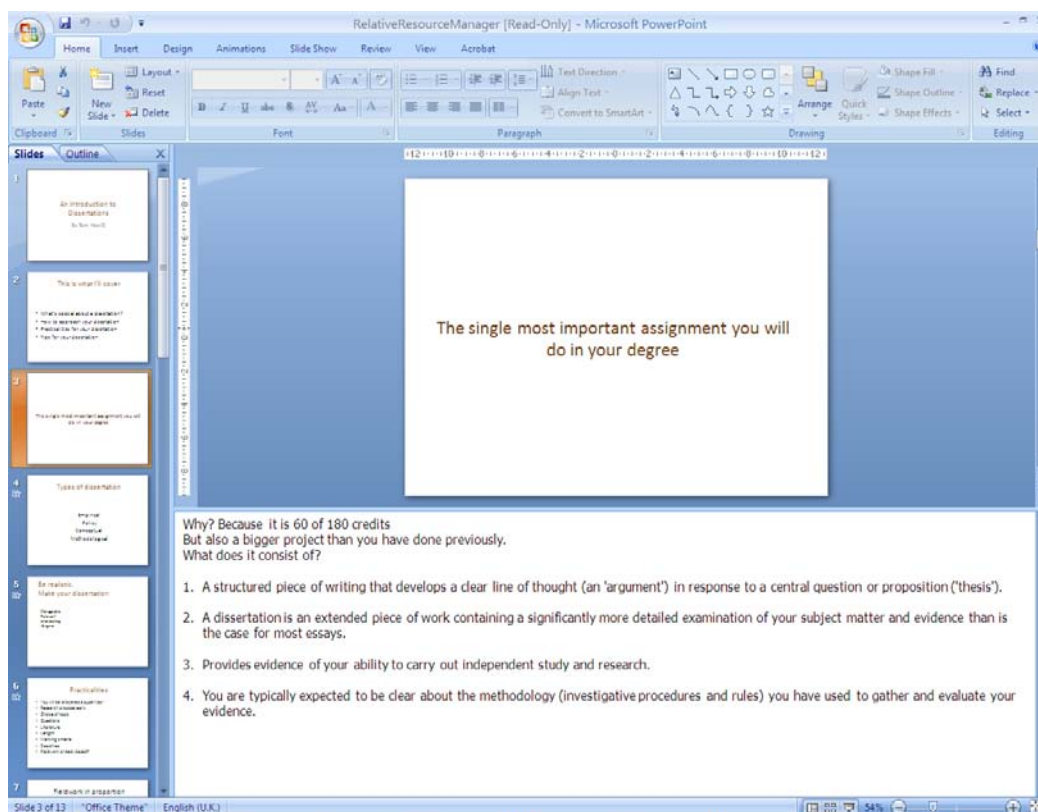
Using audio with PowerPoint allows the tutor to talk through the presentation in the same way that they would in a classroom situation. It does not need expensive equipment and is easy to produce but it must be checked and edited before being released to the students.

Showcase: Audio presentations

All students on these DL programmes take a non-assessed research methods module before they begin their dissertation work. This takes them through the basics of dissertation research, and gives them to address any initial questions relating to the proposal they will need to submit, before they are allocated a dissertation supervisor.

They receive a research methods handbook, and have scheduled group discussion board activities, and also a voice over PowerPoint presentation by the tutor talking about what a dissertation is and giving some tips for approaching the work. This presentation is produced using Camtasia Studio 7, at the tutor's desk.

From past experience, it has been noted that some of these students have problems with accessing multi-media material. They are an international group with a large geographic spread, some working in post conflict areas. With this in mind, an alternative is offered for those who are unable to listen to the voice over ppp. This is a ppp with notes, covering what the tutor is saying in the voice over.



Programme of Study:
Distance – postgraduate taught

Module: Research Methods (DL)

Discipline: International Development

Start Date for use of audio: 2011

Students: around 30 – 35

Type: Distance

Technology: Camtasia Studio 7, WebCT

Learning environment: WebCT

Design Team: Dr Tom Hewitt (module convenor); Linda Curry (e-learning manager)

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