# Language education through the creation of CD multimedia: A pilot course

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## Introduction

In the field of language teaching "Computer aided instruction" CAI has been used successfully to assist language education for many years. Most of the recent CAI systems for example TELP-CAI (Total Education-Leaning Program) are interactive and proven to make significant difference in language acquisition [Shimura et al, 1998]. A wide variety of CAI material is available to suit each facet of language instruction (speech, listening, reading, grammar etc). Furthermore the analysis of and design of multimedia in the form to TV commercials has also been used successfully in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes [McGee et al, 2000].

This paper outlines a pilot course entitled "Media English", the purpose of the course being "Language education through the creation of CD multimedia".
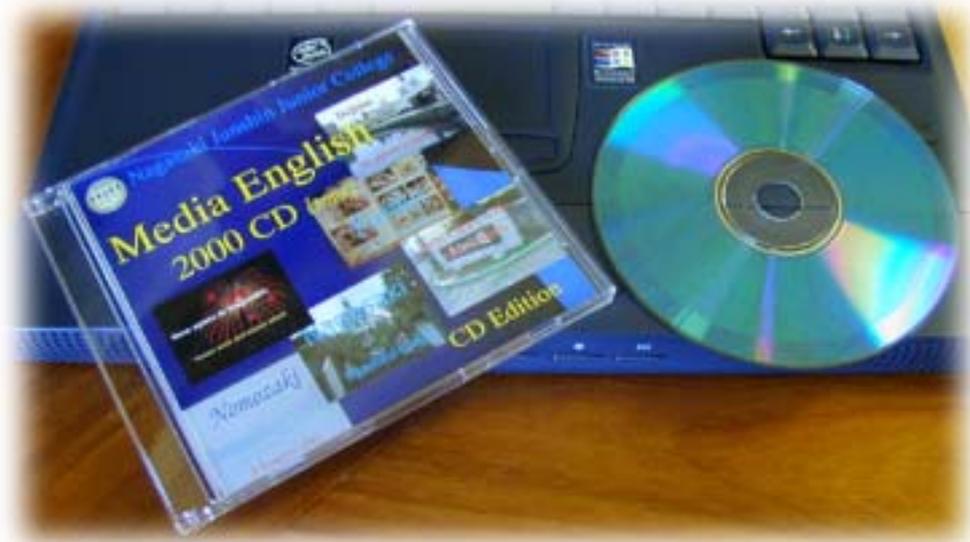


**Figure 1. The Nagasaki Junshin Catholic University Media English 2000 CD and Cover**

## Methods
### Course outline

The course outline of "Media English" is shown in Appendix A. as it appeared in the syllabus. Firstly the description read as follows:

*Students will learn the basics of creating a media video in English. Students will study example video footage and learn about special techniques and style of media video. Students will research, plan, and create their own short media videos. Students will also learn about the fundamentals of video editing, sound and title insertion.*

"As is ideally true in content-based courses, English becomes the medium rather than the subject of the class" [McGee et al, 2000], this certainly was the case in this course. A glance at the syllabus and the word English only occurs once, "Students will learn the basics of creating a media video **in English**".

The course started out with clarification of the course description, viewing and critical analysis of a video used to serve as a model (Sex, lies and the Truth). Then

students split themselves into groups which served the role of "production teams". The various forms of media presentations were outlined and each team was requested to submit a project proposal. Upon acceptance of feasible proposals, each group after producing details for the planned video footage where instructed on the use of the necessary equipment. Once video capture was complete the difficult task of editing began. This included the insertion of title, subtitle, credits, sound effects, narration and background music as appropriate. The finished products from each group (approx 5 minute video) was collated, each video was inserted into an HTML (homepage) format along with details appropriate to each production and group photos. Finally the multimedia created by each group along with the HTML interface was published in CD form, the resultant CD and cover shown in Figure 1. The following sections provide.

**Critical analysis – the model video**

The course started out by asking such questions as "What is multimedia?", "Why is it used?", "How can it be best used?" etc. After discussing such and providing clarification to these questions the video used to serve as a model was shown. The video "Sex, lies and the Truth (produced by "Focus on the Family" – family.org) was then analyzed. This led to the defining of Target Audiences – how/ why is media tailored to the target audience, differentiation by age, field of interest, sex, income bracket (particularly wrt commercials) etc. The role of the appropriately sequenced visuals, sound effects, narration, background music and original sound track, and the intense impact that this can have on an audience was largely understood from the model video, also the importance of implicit or unspoken messages. The Students were requested to define the target audience and the purpose of the model video, and asked how effective the producers were towards achieving the purpose of the video.

The aspect of any media being in itself inherently neutral was outlined, however the course teacher's recommendation being to actively consider whether a producer is using the media to "build up mankind" or to "degrade it" [Ziglar, 1990]. Using the students' unlimited and unique creativity to inspire or to educate through the creation of multimedia was actively encouraged. Specific examples were considered as of how media has been used to inspire as well as the reverse (Clifford et al, 1995). The negative influence of television is well known and epidemic [Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), 1988], and thus the instructor of this class has encouraged the consideration of subject material not to be passively neutral but actively supportive of that which "builds mankind", in essence that which is truly educational [Ziglar, 1990].

Finally the various forms of media presentation were outlined, documentary, drama, educational, entertainment etc, and how suitable each may be based on the target audience and general purpose of the presentation.

**The production teams**

Due to the very tight schedule necessary for the media production the students split into groups of 3 to 5 fairly early on in the course to start get the planning process underway. Thus much instruction and discussion was done on a "just in time" basis. The first assignments as noted in the syllabus in Appendix A was to choose a topic on which they wished to produce a multimedia presentation from. Library based and Internet based data was required for this phase. As is often the case much

"reconsideration" regarding the subject occurred as the teams went from the definition of target audience and purpose of presentation phases to the specific how to create or plan a production that would achieve the purpose they so easily defined. In essence moving from vague ideals to specific scene shoots, sketching specifics of each frame including where (location), when, how, who (cast), prop detail, scene specifics etc. Which started with an overall strategy or plan, at least in theory. Superimposed on this was the addition of text data, used mainly for Titles, credits and the insertion of narration and sound effects which largely took the form of scene appropriate background music (BGM). The planning stage required significant discussion on a per group basis, specifically relating ideals with "that which is practical" given the production budget "¥0", and equipment, time and editing restraints (many students did invest significant funding in their individual productions, mainly in the form of entrance fees, and the high cost of "less than healthy" foods).

## Lights, camera action

The class as a whole was instructed in the basics of video camera taking, camera stability, take angle relative to subject, lightning, zoom, pan etc. In the same way care regarding sound was outlined this focused mainly on the need to take care with background noise relative to desired sound, an external microphone was provided for groups as required. Specific camera usage instructions were provided on a per group basis and per student basis, the required skills included camera care, charging and changing the battery as well as camera usage. These skills were checked prior to the video camera being taken out. A single Digital Video camera was used (one group provided their own camera). A combined Video shoot and Edit schedule was created and adhered to stringently. Each group mutually decided camera usage based on the camera being available for one week per group. This stage went smoothly except for one group that was somewhat "rained out", but did well despite the weather.

Student creativity really started to blossom at this stage, many students started to discover their hidden talents.

## Editing.. spelt "hard work"

Editing is where most of the time went. Before the students left to take the raw video footage they were clearly warned that video editing is possible but very difficult if scenes were carelessly shot.

Each groups' video was copied from the Digital Video tape (very small format) to a standard VHS tape so they could plan the edit. As the technical detail involved is significant (not to be confused with difficult) and a potential deterrent to creation of multimedia in the classroom, this significant detail has thus been outlined in "*Creating CD multimedia from the classroom*" which is included as a separate article in this Journal. Editing averaged about 8 hours per group, this largely represented avoidable technical problems, which is part of the reason for the additional article. However the process of editing video has till date been possible only using very expensive professional video editing equipment. With the advent of high speed computers, video editing is possible using a computer. This process is divided into 3 basic steps (outlined in detail in the "*Creating CD multimedia from the classroom*" article). They are video capture, that is as it were storing the video in the computer in a form which the computer can use (digital format). This video capture can be from

any form of video camera, VHS, VHS-C,8 , Hi8, or DV (Digital Video) the limit will only be your computer's capture ability. Further Video capture while standard for some years on high end Macintosh computers is only recently available as standard on some high end Windows computers, for most computers the addition of a Video capture card will be required. Refer to the accompanying article for detail. Once the video is stored on the computer using appropriate software editing of the video is possible much the same as cut and paste functionality in a word processor. Finally the output stage is to save the resultant edited video in an appropriate form to an appropriate media. In this case in an MPEG form (Refer accompanying article), to the computers hard-disk for later copying to a CD.

Once the video is captured into the computer, the first stage being to decide which sections will be used and in what order. Secondly text titles are added, using the computer this is quite simple. The text for this class was mainly used for titles, subtitles and credits. Next the sound track is added. For this the use of software that supports synchronized insertion of a sound track, that is you can view the video while you speak to the microphone, in the case of insertion of narration is essential. Finally any sound effects from "sound effects clip art" or background music can be inserted (copyright issues being explained). Each production was fine tuned till mutual student and teacher satisfaction was reached. This process involved significant English practice on the part of narrators (upon the 10$^{th}$ or so take narrator's voice pitch starting to tremor), patience with technical problems and general excitement which peaked typically as background music was successfully inserted, adjusted in level and phased in and out appropriately.



**Figure 2. CD top page (HTML) from an internet browser**

## The final production – the published CD

The resultant video which was typically 4 to 5 minutes in length was saved in a compressed digital format called MPEG, pronounced m-peg. This represents about 25 Megabytes of memory (floppy disk capacity is ~1.4 Megabytes). A simple HTML (homepage or internet format) formatted interface was provided to give direct access to the individual group videos' as well as provide a more professional look, the top page is shown in Figure 2. Thus from the top menu any group video can be chosen, the video automatically starts once the page is accessed. For full control of each individual video file must be opened directly. Using HTML also made the addition of students comments, group pictures, the inclusion of teaching notes etc possible, this is shown at the bottom of Figure 3. At the top of figure 3 are sample screen shots as viewed from an internet browser.

**Figure 3. Above sample screens, below after clicking the "meet the production team" item**

## The Nagasaki Junshin Catholic University Grammy awards

"No production is complete without nominations for an Oscar", was the teacher's personal opinion, thus accordingly on the "big screen" the entire class viewed and rated each presentation. Nominations for Oscars were made, each student being given one vote (excluding their own). The nominations had to be justified in detail and of course in English.



**Figure 4. Ist (left), 2ⁿᵈ (center) and 3ʳᵈ (right) places in the Media English 2000 Grammy awards**

Boredom was noted to be at an all time low, each student was presented with their own Media English 2000 CD.

**Discussion**  English caught as well as taught?

By taking the focus off "English learning" as such, despite the fact that the course was taught primarily in English for the creation of an English based media production comments from students' made no reference to having had been "taught English", rather the English had been perhaps caught. Refer to Appendix B for a sample of student comments regarding the course.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, a course based on using the production of a multimedia presentation in English has been successfully taught. The result being the generation of much excitement among students and the publishing of the "Nagasaki Junshin

Catholic University, Media English 2000 CD".

Future work will include the conducting of before and after English aptitude and attitude tests to provide somewhat more concrete evidence of the effectiveness of the course, in conjunction with monitoring of an appropriate control group.

## Bibliography

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Nagasaki Junshin Junior College Media English CD contents used with enthusiastic permission from the students themselves (figures 2, 3 and 4)

## Appendix A

**Media English (Video)**
**Murray J Lawn**

**Description**
Students will learn the basics of creating a media video in English. Students will study example video footage and learn about special techniques and style of media video. Students will research, plan, and create their own short media videos. Students will also learn about the fundamentals of video editing, sound and title insertion.

**Goals**
After completing this course students should be able to:
1.     research using the library and the internet on a given topic.
1.     plan a short media video.
2.     make a short media video.
3.     use a video camera, simple title insertion, sound insertion and video editing equipment.

**Grading**

| | |
|---|---|
| Research | 20% |
| Media video plan | 20% |
| Raw video capture | 20% |
| Final video editing | 20% |
| Attendance | 20% |

**Textbook**
Printouts will be provided as required..

## Appendix B

Sample student comments regarding the course (unedited)

Multimedia is very usuful for us. I think it is nesecarry for modern society to use it. Nowadays, internet has been popularisationed so we can know a lot of informs by internet. I learned about how to use a video camera and how to make in this class. When we give some information for people, we had better pay attention. For example, to tell exact information and to make fun. I think multimedia is important. I'm sorry I can't explain any more. But I enjoyed this class and I'm interested in media.

Good morning, Lawn. I'd like to write about impression making my video. I thought it is very interesting to make a video. It's very fun,too. Our team made a video in a restaurant. We researched about  parfait. Many parfaits really looked good and tasted good, too. These parfaits have an unique names. For example, ”Diabolical maharaja ","Sunset Dream ", "First Kiss", "Snow White's Bad Dream", and so on. I think that we could make  an interesting and delicious movie. I used the video camera for the first time. To use the video camera is difficult a little. If I have a time to make another video,   I'd like to introduce about good place in Nagasaki.   Thank you.

I thought I could enjoy shot a video. I learned how to shot a video in this class and how to explain with English. We group decided to shot a video about sweet dessert, because we thought that many girl like sweet dessert, so we wanted know about dessert all the more. I shot a video for the first time then, so it was very difficult to shot a video. I enjoyed making a plan, shooting a video and explaining. I thought this video was good memory for us. Thank you.

Multimedia production  If I want to make a good impression on people who watch, I have to be careful some points. I will think that there are some points. First, I have to make a film of projected image more clearly,  and people who watch the video can understand the place where I make a film of the video. Second, I have to make out a good case for the content. I should say to audience participation program the place, the time, person, why I   made a feature of the topic, and my sentiment. Third, if I want to make a good impression more I should give the video BGM. I have to choose a music that     coincides with the video. For these ways,  I can get a good video that I filmed.

I planed and made a multimedia production with my friends. I knew that things are very important when planning and making a multimedia production the following .

	First, you clear up what to deliver another parson.(topic) It is the best important thing. Second, if you decided about it, you research about the topic. For example, you collect material. (book, internet, a person who know about it, go to the spots.) Third, you take the video. Then, you have to fix the video.Finally, you edit the video. You should add sounds, words etc…

	There are very important planning and making a multimedia production. It is very difficult that making a multimedia. But now, there are a lot of way about making a multimedia. For example, internet, book, magazine and so on. So, we can do that make it easy.

 I think that multimedia production when planning and making the following very

important things are four points.

 First it was very important things that we think attractive project when we plan it. Because I think that audience chach the video and they got a kick out of the project when it was very good project. So we have to select superior project.

 Next it was very important things that we do intelligible description  and we enounce cleary when we make it.

 Third it was very necessary things that we select good back music because it was good device that we acquaint the video's amviance to audience.  Finally I think that we must put ourself in audience's place when we making and planing a video.

I really enjoyed making my video because I had a chance to speak to foreigners in English.  I like to do that and it helps improving my ability of English.  Our video's title was "interview with American in the Peace Park".  The reason why we went to the Peace Park was that foreigners often visit there.  We were right.  We could interview with Americans.  Thank you so much.

" Multimedia production"   I think that multimedia is sometimes good for us and it is sometimes bad for us.   Multimedia has big effects on our life, and there are good one and bad one.   For example, good ones are how to diet, how to take care of myself and so on.   Against them, bad ones are how to kill someone, how to commit suicide, and so on.   We have to be careful when we receive some information.   In addition to it, we have to be careful when we produce multimedia.   And this time, we were careful about giving some information. For that, I was satisfied with our video.   Through this class, I could get some new knowledge and had good time.   Thank you so much.

The important things when we make a commercial message is comprehensibility. I think that the commercial message, which TV viewer can't understand what producer want to  bring down to them, is a waste. There are many commercials, which we can't understand. For example, Japanese commercials are not with concepts of the commercial goods because Japanese commercials make a point of entertainers. Therefore, I sometimes wander that  why many artists are in front of the camera more than the commercial goods. Of course, I like the interesting commercials more than saltless one. However, I feel that the most important thing of the commercial is "simple" "Comprehensibility" is the best, I think. I really enjoyed making the video, "the interview with non Japaneses". I felt that I must study English more hard to speak to non Japanese who visit Japan, after we filmed the video at Peace Park.

Student quotations used with permission