

## Slidecast Yourself. Online Student Presentations

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### Abstract

Although presentations via visual aids software have been embraced as the primary tool for students to communicate in educational settings, many colleges and universities fail "to include those skills in the general education curriculum". Less time is devoted to this specific aspect of language training. Additionally, recently introduced communication technologies such as podcasts, blogs and social networking websites object to the 'traditional' presentational situation, which regards the speaker as 'the sage on the stage'. One of the methods to answer this twofold challenge is to introduce slidecasting into education. Slidecasting can be described as podcasting by synchronizing PowerPoint (or any other visual aids software) and voice. Previously, this technology was limited to e-lectures and webinars, but since mid 2007 websites like SlideShare ([www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)) have made slidecasts accessible for everybody by enhancing the user-friendliness of the production process. By letting students present online and thus crossing the boundaries of the traditional classroom, it becomes feasible to incorporate presentations skills training into strictly timed curricula. Moreover, these websites display a YouTube-like interface, with all its Web 2.0 features. Also in this respect, slidecasting could prove to be an interesting new ICT teaching tool, because it embodies this idea of identity, which is a key element in social media and, more importantly, in learning theory too. Kenneth Burke (1897-1993) already stressed its significance for the communication process and learning. We therefore integrated this new presentation tool in our business communication classes at Artevelde university college (Ghent, Belgium). 60 accountancy and tax students were asked to create a slidecast in which they presented the quarterly earnings of the company producing their favorite product. This served as the final assignment of their presentations skills training of that course. From this group 10 students were interviewed. They were asked to comment on their slidecast and their experiences producing one. In addition to this, a questionnaire was sent to all students to confirm the qualitative data. Our findings indicate that students are convinced that it is relatively feasible to create a slidecast, but apparently the social context plays an important role in this. Furthermore, they believe that slidecasting could be fruitful in any language-training course. Based on these results, the paper will provide a hands-on instruction manual on how to implement slidecasting into education.