

Courseware Reviews

Toolbook 3.0 and Multimedia Toolbook 3.0

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Title of package: *Toolbook 3.0, Multimedia Toolbook 3.0*

Available from: Asymetrix Corporation, 110 – 110th Avenue NE, Suite 700, Bellevue, WA 98004, (800) 448-6543 (Sales)

Price (with educational discount): *Toolbook* : \$135 (10-pack, \$820); *Multimedia Toolbook* : \$537 (10-pack, \$3,800)

Equipment required: Any computer with an Intel 386SX or better microprocessor (486DX-33 or better highly recommended), *Microsoft Windows 3.1* or higher, 4MB memory (8MB or more highly recommended), 37MB free disk space for full *Multimedia Toolbook 3.0* installation (less for non-multimedia version, or for program files only in multimedia version), VGA video (256-color capability recommended), mouse, CD-ROM drive and sound card for multimedia applications.

Installation procedure: Standard installation for a Windows program

Summary

Toolbook is an authoring environment for developing graphically oriented computer programs for the *Microsoft Windows* operating system. It enables courseware developers to create a series of screens made up of diverse components, such as "fields" for displaying text, "buttons" for initiating actions, "draw objects" for images created using built-in drawing tools, and "paint objects" imported from other sources. It is available in two forms—a basic package for building and running programs containing visual information only, and a multimedia package for incorporating sound, video, animation and other kinds of multimedia events.

Evaluation

The recently released version 3.0 of *Toolbook* and *Multimedia Toolbook* has numerous features added to an already highly versatile authoring environment, and the user interface has been changed extensively. The earlier versions displayed a blank page in authoring mode, with a menu bar at the top and a floating "tool palette" from which to choose objects to draw on the page. The new version displays a greater variety

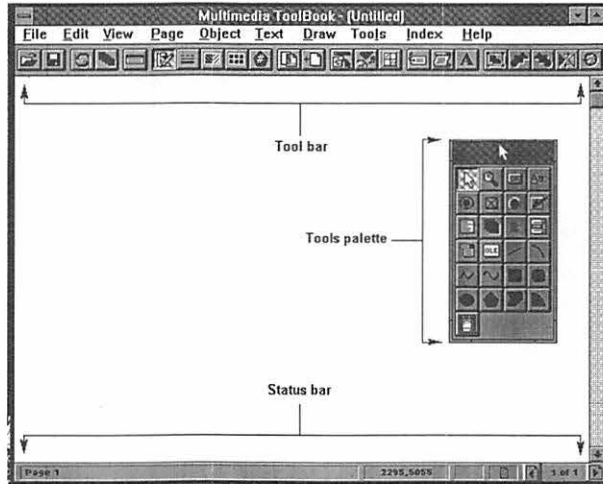


Figure 1

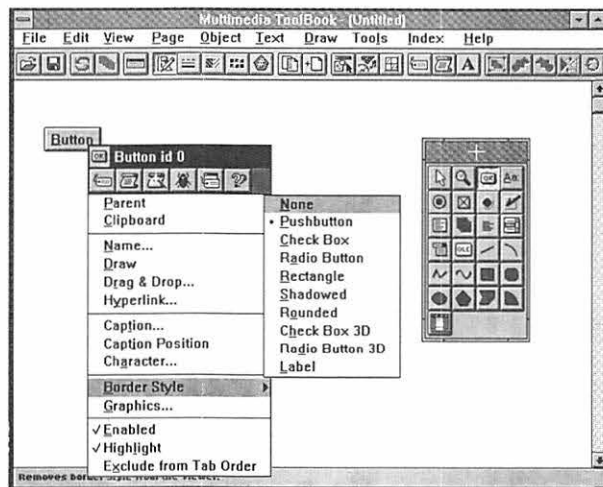


Figure 2

of objects in the tool palette, as well as a "tool bar" along the top which gives the user single-click access to many of the functions previously available only through menu bar choices (Fig. 1). Version 3.0 has also added "right-click" menus, so that clicking on an object with the right mouse button pops up next to it a menu of properties and actions related to that object (Fig. 2).

These new paths to familiar functions take some getting used to at first, but once learned, they become indispensable. For example, creating a field and setting its properties (e.g., name, type, border style, font, alignment, whether it is editable, script, etc.) used to require a series of four or five mouse or keyboard actions, but now the user can simply right-click on the field and from the pop-up menu choose the properties to be set. Further, a greater number of properties are available for the various types of objects. For example, fields can now be given a raised or inset look against the page, and buttons can be given a 3-dimensional effect, simply by choosing the appropriate border style.

In *Multimedia Toolbook 3.0* another outstanding improvement is its comprehensive management of multimedia events. In earlier versions one could use a separate "Multimedia Widgets" book to create a multimedia event, and then import it as a button script into the book being developed. But that script often had to be transferred elsewhere (e.g., to the page script, if the event was to take place upon entering a page). Also, the developer had to keep track manually of the locations of files referenced by the events, and make sure those files would be available to the program if it was transferred to a different computer. The new version incorporates a "Clip Manager," through which one can quickly create and name clips, establish links to the files they require, and then refer to them by name in the script for an object. Thereafter, *Multimedia Toolbook* itself takes over the job of maintaining the integrity of the links and making sure the appropriate files are transferred when the program is copied to another computer.

Also, developers can easily position visual clips on the screen by creating "stages" for them, and they can choose how to open, display, and close clips by setting the properties of the stages (e.g., pre-effect, post-effect, sizing behavior, stage anchor). They can create or import "resources" (i.e., icons, cursors, menu bars, bitmaps, fonts, color palettes) for use throughout a program by means of an integrated "Resource Manager." And those who understand the Windows interface and terminology well can exploit a new "Viewers" capability

for creating "pop-up" or "child" windows with their own border styles, caption bars, system resources, menu bars, etc.

Although it is very easy to create screen objects in *Toolbook*, in order to make them do anything useful, developers must write "scripts" for them using its native programming language, "Openscript." This requires some knowledge of computer programming techniques, and thus *Toolbook* is not suitable for instructors who simply want to insert their own materials into an already designed framework. On the other hand, developers have much greater flexibility in this environment than in prefabricated "templates," and with just a little practice in script writing, they can implement their own concepts of effective computer-based learning activities. In many circumstances, too, they can use the new "autoscript" facility in *Toolbook 3.0* and *Multimedia Toolbook 3.0* to insert pre-written scripts for specific actions. Although these scripts sometimes require further editing, they nevertheless provide an excellent beginning framework for implementing many actions.

The new version of *Toolbook* and *Multimedia Toolbook* includes many other features which can be useful in a variety of contexts. An indexing facility builds a lookup table for finding occurrences of words in fields throughout the program. This capability would be especially applicable to work with large textual databases. Further, one can now integrate graphic images into text fields, and format text within fields by means of the RTF (Rich Text Format) protocol. One can display various graphic images on a button, according to whether it is enabled or disabled, checked or unchecked, normal or inverted. One can embed information from another program through the Windows OLE (Object Linking and Embedding) facility, and cause it to be updated automatically whenever the information in the other program changes. A drag-and-drop function allows one to create the effect of dragging objects to other objects on the screen. And one can create path animations which move objects along a defined path. These two latter capabilities could be useful for showing changes in word order in different contexts.

In summary, *Toolbook 3.0* and *Multimedia Toolbook 3.0* offer a wealth of features for creating sophisticated foreign language instructional programs. Unfortunately, they still lack any answer-judging or pattern-matching capability, and are thus less useful for creating practice or testing modules than are authoring systems such as DASHER or WIN-CALIS. Nevertheless, for those who wish to create their own instructional

programs from the ground up, they provide an extremely rich environment in which to work.

Correction

In the last issue of this journal, the review of Carolyn Fidelman's *In the French Body* and *In the German Body* stated incorrectly that most of the scenes were scripted. Professor Fidelman has informed the editor that the native speakers who played the roles improvised every scene, and that the producers chose the best among them from over 1,000 hours of taping. ■

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Two Commercial Language Software Series, or What's Wrong with This Picture?

Mikle D.
Ledgerwood
SUNY at Stony
Brook

Title of packages: 1) *Learn to Speak 4.0* (Hyperglot) in Spanish and French. Soon available in other languages. 2) *The Rosetta Stone* (Fairfield), Level Ia, in Spanish, French, German, ESL, and Russian. Level II is under development.

Author/Publisher: 1) Hyperglot, P.O. Box 10746, Knoxville, TN 37939-0746, (800) 726-5087. 2) Fairfield Language Technologies, 122 South Main Street-Suite 400, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, (703) 432-6166

Price: Price varies for both series. List price is about \$395 for a complete copy of *Rosetta Stone* and \$99 for *Learn to Speak 4.0*. Street prices can be considerably lower and some software vendors can supply these at a discount. Networking is possible for *Rosetta Stone*, but is not recommended for *Learn to Speak 4.0* due to its use of digital video, which requires high bandwidth for networking. A new version of *Rosetta Stone*, labeled a "sampler," is not tested.

Equipment Required: Either: MPC (IBM-compatible 386SX or higher), hard disk, MS-DOS 3.1 or later, Microsoft MS-DOS CD-ROM Extensions (MSCDEX) version 2.2 or later, Microsoft Windows 3.1 or later, 4MB RAM, MPC-compliant CD-ROM drive, MPC-compliant audio board, SVGA card and monitor (capable of 640 x 480 resolution with 256 colors), Microsoft-compatible mouse, external speakers or headphones connected to the audio board, and a microphone connected to the audio board; or Color Macintosh, hard disk drive, CD-ROM drive, 4MB RAM with System 7, microphone. Both applications recommend you to set up space on your hard drive for files.

Installation procedure: Normal CD-ROM installation with Windows or Macintosh

Summary

These programs are the two most-commonly purchased multimedia language learning programs and are very handsome programs, with *Learn to Speak* scoring high marks with its help features and its use of motion video. *Rosetta Stone* provides the user with four pictures on the screen and selectable audio and textual support for the pictures. The goal is to select the picture which relates to the audio or textual input. *Learn to Speak* Spanish is a bit like a first-year textbook. It is better than a textbook in its graphics, its bits of motion video, and its feedback. Yet a textbook has infinitely superior exercises and real grammar explanations.

Contents

Both of these programs intend to bring multimedia into basic language learning. Both include high-quality audio and lovely graphics, and give students the ability to record their own voices. *Learn to Speak* also includes digital video sequences. *Rosetta Stone* (Level 1a) includes eight lessons with twelve screens apiece. It presents its users with a screen divided into four quadrants. The user has the choice of hearing a text relating to one of the quadrants, or seeing the text, or not seeing or hearing. Putting all of the combinations of hearing and seeing pictures and text together gives the user twelve run modes. Additional features include the possibility of having the computer "grade" the user on his/her choice of quadrants, a dictation feature allowing the user to write out what is heard, and a voice recording feature allowing the user to imitate the native speakers. The program does not use English in its non-English programs.

Learn to Speak 4.0 (which represents a major change from the 3.x versions), with its textbook format, is divided into thirty chapters each of which purportedly relates to some topic of life in its cultural setting. Each of the chapters begins with a small movie of a foreign scene and is then followed by a vocabulary card.

The vocabulary is given as a list. Clicking on a word brings up both a native speaker saying the word and an American (often one with a very noticeable regional accent) translating the word. Occasionally windows containing more information spring up as well.

Finally, the user can hear the vocabulary word in a sentence given in a motion video sequence. Additional cards bring up exercises relating to the vocabulary, a card with the

"action up to now" as well as a card with "the story." Both of these cards incorporate motion video.

Skills Focused Upon

Both concentrate on lexical learning to the near exclusion of grammar, syntax, or culture. *Learn to Speak*, however, does have a few sketchy grammatical explanations and occasional cultural explanations. *Rosetta Stone* does not. In fact *Rosetta Stone* uses the same pictures for all of its programs. Thus Spanish or Russian learners see the same American pictures as English learners.

Theoretical Foundation

In some senses these programs are both throwbacks to the age of Sputnik and ALM. They make the mistake many pedagogues do of assuming that learning a second language is just like learning a first language. Thus the goal is to surround the user with the language studied much in the way a child is surrounded by the first language learned.

Rosetta Stone does surround its users effectively. They find themselves in a world where English (unless the disc is the English program) does not exist. Yet learning in this purely inductive manner can quickly become tedious. The knowledge acquired is appropriated in such a passive manner as to leave many learners unsure that much of the knowledge acquired will be maintained.

Learn to Speak is often like a college text of the '80s in which users concentrate on a certain number of touristic and daily life subjects. At the same time it returns to the '60s with its insistence on dialogs and dialog memorization. The bad old days of "*Où est la plume de ma tante?*" are not far away here.

Evaluation

Both of these discs are flawed but *Rosetta Stone* is much less so. *Rosetta Stone* has a simple idea implemented very creatively. While learning language in such an inductive and passive manner is not for everybody, its intelligent use of pictures and sound can inspire language learning in a wide group of users. Its dictation and voice recording modes are especially to be recommended. My own students have found *Rosetta Stone* interesting, if not exciting. Perhaps its biggest backers are my third-year students who use it for aural review, helping boost their confidence.

Learn to Speak is so excellent in so many ways and so horrendous in so many others that it is hard to evaluate. Its groundbreaking use of digital motion video in a commercial language-learning CD-ROM must be congratulated. Its helps are a model for all other designers and its screens are

beautiful. Its ability to have its users see and hear a native speaker saying their vocabulary words in the context of a sentence must also be applauded. Yet why are the motion video sequences so routinely appalling? If I was fed up by the quality of the acting, the blue backgrounds, and the fact that all one sees in most video sequences are talking heads, how would someone having to use this disc every day for a year feel? Even more importantly, why must we continue to have to memorize uninteresting dialogs in this day and age?

All of *Learn to Speak's* exercises require its users to have memorized the "story" and the "action" in each lesson to answer correctly the exercises' questions. Answers must be correct to the last accent mark. What is even worse is that this approach will not allow the program to credit correct answers which are not found in the text of the dialogs! Isn't penalizing students for giving correct answers one of the worst things teaching software can do?

Technology

These CD-ROM discs make very good use of the technology available. Nice features are numerous and well-implemented. *Learn to Speak* uses more technological advances than *Rosetta*, but *Rosetta's* design does not encourage more technological features. As an aside, many users with slower computers, especially on the DOS side, have complained that they are unable to use the motion video.

Accuracy

The language used in these programs is good and the speakers are clear, yet not either too slow or too fast for beginners. There is little in the way of inaccuracies in the languages or overtly stereotypical information.

Curricular Compatibility

Both of these programs can be used with first- and second-year high school and university programs. In fact that is their intended audience. I find *Rosetta Stone* to be good for extra aural/oral work done outside of the classroom. I think that *Learn to Speak* is good for its vocabulary learning and can supplement a regular language course as well.

Conclusion

Therefore I can recommend these programs with major hesitation after potential users have noted all of the warnings I give above. In spite of its technological advances and its beautiful screen design, *Learn to Speak* is so flawed that it can raise one's blood pressure. Nevertheless, if one chooses only to use its vocabulary-learning capacity it can be very helpful. Some of the exercise cards and a small sample of the motion video could also be used. However, anyone hoping to use this disc

as the textbook in a course or even as a supplementary textbook had better look elsewhere.

Rosetta Stone is better in its pedagogy, yet its price scares away casual users. My third-year students really enjoyed how it made them "feel good" and some of them used its audio recording feature. Yet the best summary, perhaps, comes from my seven-year-old daughter, who used it for an hour and then complained, "But, Daddy, there's only one game on it!" Sample testing of what she had done then revealed that she had retained almost no active knowledge from the disc. ■

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