

Translators' report

In addition to the experiences with the SlideWiki platform of the core team, we also recruited a number of translators for the core content. In addition to the translation work, we asked these translators to evaluate their experience. The reports (as attached in the appendix in original quotes) were then compiled, and their experience synthesized. This is the focus of this document.

Platform and concept and status

The idea behind SlideWiki was generally praised by the translators. The provision for multi-lingual decks was seen as very positive, and SlideWiki was seen to offer promising functions on a variety of subjects and features, such as deck forking and appending slides. It was seen to be of great academic value, and to have the possibility of having a great impact on the future of education.

While the platform was praised to have a lot of potential, the translators did not see the platform to be in a usable state, since in practice it was rather problematic. It was generally seen to be buggy and slow (in particular in saving certain slides) and no fun to interact with. Since SlideWiki had no provision for an offline mode, working while having connection problems resulting in double work (or rather, as argued later on, triple work).

All in all it was seen to be a work in progress with room for improvement, and to be generally rather frustrating to work with.

Specific issues with the platform

The perception described above is detailed through a number of more specific remarks on the shortcomings of the implementation of the idea. These concerns can be grouped by observations on important and formatting of slides and decks, their editing, translation issues and miscellaneous observations.

Import and formatting issues

Arguably the most impeding issues of the translation process as for the observations of the translation team concern the import and subsequent formatting of the translated material.

Due to the unavailability of the translation functionality at the beginning of the translation project (and numerous issues and bugs of features impeding seamless translation), much translation was done offline in a different presentation editor in order to get migrated later, resulting in extra work. Due to the rather specific restrictions on PowerPoint slides, this resulted in losses in features, style and graphics of the slides, and required (heavy) post-editing. To our translators' disappointment, it was not possible to edit slides in PowerPoint, and upload them subsequently. The readjustment of slide format was reportedly necessary frequently.

Particular problems that were observed by the translation team included the upload and editing of images (in particular resizing and moving) and the observation that bullet point function impeded formatting. Again, this made editing frequently necessary, and resulted in a lot of work for slide formatting.

The introduction of the current version on November 6th 2018 changed the format of existing slides, which again resulted in substantial post-processing.

Editing issues

In addition to the input and formatting issues mentioned above, a number of further editing issues were experienced. Arguably the most time-consuming impediment the translators observed was the impossibility of copy and paste functionality, which made the editing process barely compatible with other editors. Specific edit elements that impeded the work of the translators were the observation that the banners were too narrow and showed unexpected behavior, that bold and italics formatting carries over to next words, requiring unintuitive and unefficient work-arounds, and that typing features didn't work, which changed the appearance of the slide under selection.

Translation issues

While the observations described above show that the translation process was hard enough for the translators using roman alphabets, non-roman alphabets caused a range of new problems. These alphabets were particularly hard to handle in conjunction with roman alphabets, in particular that SlideWiki seemed to only offer a single (roman) text-directionality. Word shuffling and phrase structure displacement resulted in grammatical issues. It was reported to be hard to redefine the deck default language when faulty. Issues were particularly seen with the pre-November 2018 version of the SlideWiki platform.

Miscellaneous issues

While most issues raised by the translation team were sketched above, some of these issues concern other aspects. This concerns the behavior of text boxes (such as resizing and moving issues), which was very unexpected to the translators. Also this made some slides impossible to edit, since elements disappeared behind other elements, making these elements impossible to edit. Other slides had quite a different issue, coined the cursor issue, in which no cursor appeared in the edit mode (similarly to the attempt to edit images), which made the selection of deck elements (and thus the edit process as a whole) impossible.

Shortcomings on documentation and intuitive use

While, as seen above, most impediments concerned buggy functionalities of the platform, other feedback by the translation team concerned documentation and intuitive use of the platform. Features and handling were experienced as being non-intuitive, resulting in a steep learning curve that made the translation process more tedious. This is exacerbated by design choices that resulted in the editing tools to be quite different to the background of many users, in particular with word processing programs. A particular aspect that resulted in repeated try-and-error was the fact that the default font-size was hard to gauge. All in all, the translation tools were seen to be insufficient for a clear and straight-forward work flow.

Miscellaneous observations

Finally, a number of observations were made that don't concern the editing process in a more narrow meaning. This concerned the lack organizational tools, such as the lack of co-operational communication tools and the missing focus on group activity. The former was problematic due to issues with the commenting function, resulting in the necessity for external instruments, whereas the latter made it hard to learn from the experiences of peers. Furthermore it was remarked that a spell or grammar checker would be nice to ease the process.

The overall verdict regarding the issues mentioned above were seen to make frequent readjustment necessary.

Appendix: Raw reports of the translators

English translator

I liked the idea of a shared presentation platform with the capacity for providing the presentations in multiple languages, but in practice the SlideWiki platform is rather problematic. In the beginning I encountered problems with the ability to enter translations for several of my decks. These decks had the main language mislabeled as English, when it was in fact German. There was no easy way for me to rectify the situation. I could not simply reassign the main deck's language to the correct language and go on with my translations instead I had to write to my project coordinators to sort the problem out. In the meantime I worked off-line using Microsoft PowerPoint with the hopes that I could upload the presentation once the language problem was sorted, but to no avail. There was no way to upload the PowerPoint presentation that I could see. Additionally, copy and paste from PowerPoint to SlideWiki also didn't work as the formatting was wrong. In the end, I simply had to do my translations slide for slide in SlideWiki which was effectively double the work. My suggestion would be to make the system more compatible with other presentation programs.

Within SlideWiki there are several small bugs and kinks. If you are writing over bold or italicized words, you had to be careful as the bold/italics often carried over into the next word thus emphasizing words that didn't need to be. This couldn't be undone by clicking on the bold button instead you had to undone what you had done and specifically write over the bold/italicized word in the text and then begin the next work in the middle of the next "normally formatted" word. Granted, you could usually assign bold/ italics to words that weren't initially so formatted, but this bug required extra energy and attention to avoid making formatting errors.

At least one of the slides I encountered couldn't be translated because the cursor never appeared in the slide text box. These slides were normal text slides and not graphics or charts (For example slide 19 of deck 11 or the header of slide 8 in Deck 9).

Formatting in general was problematic as font size and indentations would randomly change during translation and text boxes couldn't be moved around to allow for changes in sentence size due to translation (for example slide 14 deck 5).

Changing the font size was troublesome as the default font size is not listed. This was especially true since the update on 06.11. which changed the font sizing of several slides making parts of the text unreadable as they fell below the bottom border of the slide box (see slide 10 deck 7 in the original German for an example- all English slides beyond deck 7 have been adjusted). This flaw could be remedied by making the font smaller but as the initial size of the font isn't shown this fix requires experimentation. This took more time and energy than truly necessary.

At times the system was slow to save. I was unable to save slide 8 of deck 12 despite trying several times on two different days. This is extremely problematic.

On the positive side being able to use the HTML code to copy duplicate slides was handy and rather easy to use. Sadly this particular function wasn't used often beyond the introductory slide.

Overall I found myself rather frustrated with the system. Though the bugs could be considered minor annoyances, especially for a smaller slide presentation they took on a life of their own for this larger project making the experience tiresome and frustrating.

Greek translator

The concept of SlideWiki appears to be of a great academic value and I enjoyed the concept of it. Some technical issues, however, need be fixed for a smoother use of the site by the translators and users. One of the main impediments, which had a significant impact on the workload, was the lack of an offline mode. As a result, a big bulk of work had to be repeated every time there was an internet connection issue. Another issue which hindered the translation progress was the use of the typing features of the site; a good deal of time was spent on trying to determine how the features of it worked. It was noticed that the typing features either did not work properly or they were changing

the appearance of the rest of the slide when selected. In particular, the bullet point functions seemed to cause most of the trouble by changing the font or the font size. This technical issue hindered the translation process due to the necessity of repeated editing and constant focus on the ‘aesthetics’ of the slides. Perhaps for an easier use, a menu more compatible with the features of Microsoft packages would be useful or perhaps the ability of working on Microsoft PowerPoint and then simply uploading the slides to a compatible website. In this manner, a significant amount of time would not be consumed on editing slides constantly. Lastly, another suggestion for future use could be the feature of a grammar and spelling error detector so that time would not be spent on finding unnoticed errors due to fast typing.

Chinese translator

I have attended the external trial-team for the Test of SlideWiki at the Institute for computer science at the University of Leipzig from 15.08.2018 until 31.10.2018. I joined a special group of translators, who were assigned for different tasks. In the first place we translated lectures, which were used in direct educational settings. Secondly, we tested SlideWiki by using translation functions and converting documents to the platform. Thirdly, we tested the cooperative functions and the usability as a whole.

The first task was fulfilled by using a direct translation in Chinese in different formats and writing programs and the convert it to SlideWiki. Here a lot of problems occurred and a direct conversion without a clean up was actually not possible. The re-lunch of November worsened the situation.

The second task was fulfilled by using the translation tools of SlideWiki. These were insufficient for a clear and straight workflow and was not usable for a huge amount of slides or for a longer time of direct work in the desks.

The third task was fulfilled by a coordinated work and exchange within the group of translators. SlideWiki was here not very helpful because a wide co-operational communication was practically just possible throughout the comment-functions, which were mostly fixed on the single slide in the decks and not on a co-operative group-level. Therefore the most co-operative work was done on other channels. The usability of SlideWiki was on the other side good when we actually had to work on specific Slides in a certain Deck.

After all the functions of SlideWiki are promising but during our trial time too much problems and readjustments emerged and there for the real working time for the translation were not made in SlideWiki. Greatest problem was the readjustment of the different formats and the lost of a lot of time. The problem of a missing focus on group-activity in the design of SlideWiki made it even harder to co-ordinate an efficient gain of experience and for a fast collective problem-solving-management.

Arabic translator

To summarize my experience as a user in SlideWiki in a few lines, I first have to say that I like the idea behind the project and I believe that its going to have a great impact in education in the future. What is special about the SlideWiki platform is the fact that it covers a variety of subjects and features – such as the “Fork” feature for the creation of copies of existing decks, the “Append” feature to embed a set of slides as a sub-deck and the multilingual environment.

Nevertheless, it’s still a work in progress and there’s a lot of room for improvements. The platform is generally really slow, it takes a lot of time to load pages and with a few bugs here and there it doesn’t make it exactly “fun” to interact in it.

Another huge problem is that it does not support every PowerPoint format, which leads to loss in features, style, and graphics; when you try to upload some slides including these not supported features you end up losing most of them.

Uploading and editing pictures on the platform wasn’t easy, either, a lot of weird things happened while trying to resize or move a picture.

Furthermore, the editing banners are too narrow, they pop up and disappear whenever they want to, and they are not exactly “easy” to handle.

It gets even more frustrating when you get to translating, trying to write in another language with no Roman alphabet, such as Arabic to be more precise, or even a little bit of both.

The words get shuffled, leading to displacement in the phrase structure and the whole grammar gets all messed up. This caused confusion in the meaning of many Arabic sentences which had English words in them.

In word processing, you have a main text direction which is either left-to-right or right-to-left, and I think the problem is caused by SlideWiki not having the option to support both directions at the same time.