

We would like to use Squeak as the instrument for expression!

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Abstract

At Visual Arts College Osaka, we are exploring ways to use the computer as an instrument for expressing art. Usually, our students learn to create works of Web, CD-ROM and video content using the computer. We had been thinking about using Squeak for a while, however, it was not easy to introduce Squeak in our classes because of the issues relevant to the need of using the Japanese language in Squeak and the need of Japanese manuals. Fortunately, we met with Mr. Kazuhiro Abe in May 2002, who was developing a Japanese edition of Squeak. We decided to use Squeak in our class for 3 months aiming at making Squeak “our instruments.” This attempt was experimental.

1. Introduction

The purpose of our attempt was as follows:

1. Learn methods of using Squeak
2. Search the Web for Japanese manuals and tutorials.
3. To report issues of the Japanese edition to the developer, from the standpoint of beginners
4. Acquire the habit of positively participating in the community.
5. According to various aptitudes, raise the talents who teach Squeak to beginners in the future
6. Clarify problems and devise ways to cope with them so that beginners can keep using the system.

7. Devise methods to continuously use Squeak in classes.

Finally and the most importantly, we would like to create environments where the students can feel that Squeak is their favorite.

2. Overview of the Experimental Class

The class we offered was also experimental. Students received the Japanese edition of Squeak from us, searched relevant manuals and tutorials on the Web, learned and used the system by themselves, learned from others, and reported problems to each other. The first thing they experienced in the class was SqueakToys, then a Swiki server was offered, and they learned basics of the Smalltalk programming tools using the turtle graphics.



Figure 1. Work of student 1

3. Problems

The following three problems were identified through this attempt:

1. There are not sufficient Japanese manuals and tutorials for beginners when they want to learn Squeak by themselves.
2. The students wanted to do something beyond what SquakToys offer, which introduces the need to teach them Smalltalk. We need to find a good way to introduce Smalltalk to the learners of SqueakToys.
3. We have not yet found a good way to offer a continuous learning opportunity.

4. Result

One of the purposes of our attempt was to clarify problems that might arise while using the first Japanese edition of Squeak and to look for ways to solve them.

Under present conditions, there is a difference in “quality” between students’ art works created with Squeak and with other tools. The reason why this difference arises would not be the Squeak system but the way the system is used and taught. This issue needs to be solved in order to make Squeak our instrument for artistic expression.

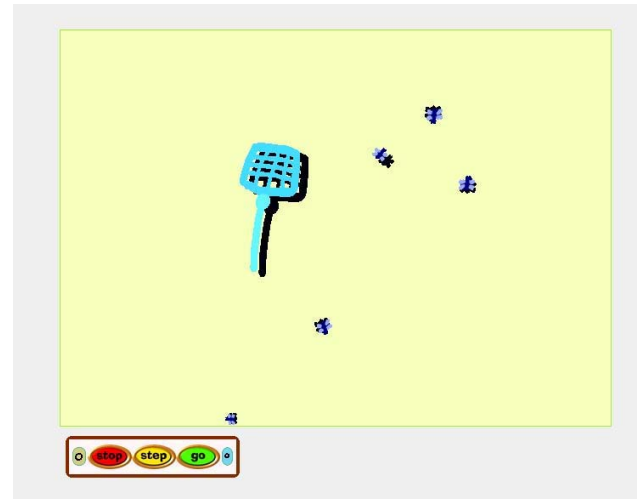


Figure 2. Work of student 2