THE IMPACT OF THE DELIVERY OF PREPARED POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS ON THE LEARNING PROCESS

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This article describes the process of the preparation and delivery of Power Point presentations and how it can be used by teachers as a resource for classroom teaching. The advantages of this classroom activity covering some of the problems and providing a few suggestions for dealing with those difficulties are also outlined. The major objective of the present paper is to investigate the students’ ability to choose the material and the content of Power Point presentations on professional topics via the Internet as well as the ability to prepare and deliver the presentation in front of the audience. The factors which determine the choice of the presentation subject are also analysed in this paper. After the delivery students were requested to self- and peer-assess the difficulties they faced in preparation and performance of the presentations by writing the reports. Learners’ attitudes to the choice of the topic of Power Point presentations were surveyed by administering a self-assessment questionnaire.

Keywords: prepared presentation, careful and thorough preparation, search the web, communicative skills, self- and peer-evaluation, autonomous learning.

Background information

Preparing Power Point presentations can be considered to be an effective teaching/learning process which stimulates intellectual curiosity and moves students from the passive role of recipients to the active role of builders of knowledge and provides a real audience for communication. As the student plans, prepares, practises, delivers and finally reflects upon a presentation they engage in a very active learning process which can promote critical and analytical thinking and the selection, evaluation and use of appropriate arguments (Burns, Sinfield 2004: 123). Learning is expanded and students get motivated and eager to present and share the information they acquire through self-study.

This activity also allows to introduce the Internet into the language teaching. Today’s language learning process is impossible or inadequate if it lacks such components as computers, the Internet, or any up-to-date technology (Kavaliauskienė, Vaičiūnienė 2005: 83). Furthermore, on the Internet news is constantly updated, so it is always current, and students have a wider range of headlines to choose from.

The delivery of prepared presentations in front of the audience can be viewed as one of the stages of the whole process. The activity of prepared Power Point presentations enable students “to evaluate, review, compare, negotiate, simulate, create, investigate, hypothesise, organise, bargain, debate, interview, listen, watch, retell, experiment, play, survey and report” (Teeler, Gray 200: 63).
Theoretical background

Giving Power Point presentations can be considered as a process consisting of six main stages:

**Preparation stage:** Students get an idea of what presentations are and what they should be aiming to produce. Careful and thorough preparation is the key to a successful presentation (Seely 2000: 65). It is also good to have examples of past presentations: a video film and well-prepared slides. The learners are asked to begin their research by brainstorming everything they know about the topic, to make notes, draw mind maps, use whatever technique they find best for developing lots of information. After explaining the idea behind the presentation learners are asked to propose a scheme of work:

- what they want to include in the presentation,
- who will be responsible for a particular issue,
- an idea of the time it will take to produce each part of the project,
- any material or resources they might need.

The teacher would then sit down with each group for 10 minutes to discuss their proposals. At this point the evaluation and assessment procedures would also be explained.

**Stage of material collection and arrangements** is the point at which students search the web for information, select it, generate ideas, discuss them in groups, make short personal notes and appropriate slides. They need to use as many different sources as they can, e.g. books, files, directories, professional advice, etc. Once they have made their notes, they begin to sort them into must, should, could referring back to the objective to help at this stage. Learners are asked to contact the teacher via e-mail, negotiate the choice of the material and prepare Power Point variant for making a presentation in front of the audience. Introducing and reviewing structures such as imperatives, conditionals and passive voice, conversion of written language into spoken is needed at this stage.

**Rehearsal stage:** Once students have prepared presentations, they must rehearse them. They need to structure the activity in advance, to prepare an outline of it and practise the whole presentation at home. They can also be asked to practise by first giving a three-minute presentation.

**Delivery stage:** The students present information to the audience and they need to use not only their speaking skills but their communicative skills as well.

**Follow-up stage:** The students ask questions and share information about the problems they had during the performance, and discuss the problems they might have had and what needs to be improved. Later students produce short written reviews of the presentations. In that way, oral presentations can be successfully transformed into written assignments.

**The stage of evaluation and assessment.** Self- and peer-evaluation of the performance has a great impact on the learning process and it can be a part of the assessment of the entire presentation. This enables students to note what they have learned about the presentations, i.e. to revise the topic they have heard and to review lexis. As with any piece of work a presentation needs to be acknowledged and evaluated. It is not enough to just say ‘that is great’ after all the work learners have put in.

The author of the present paper uses a set of assessment criteria, i.e. a simple presentation evaluation/assessment report, which comments on aspects of the presentation such as content, design, language work and involves the whole preparation process of this activity not only the oral presentation stage.

**Some advantages of presentations are as follows:**

1. Increased motivation - learners become personally involved in the presentation.
2. All four skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing are integrated.
Speaking: presenting information, describing graphs, pictures in slides, responding to feedback.

Listening: critical listening for details, asking for clarification.

Reading: skimming and scanning for information, reading for detail.

Writing: reformulating texts, making and taking notes, writing reviews.

3. Autonomous learning is promoted as learners become more responsible for their own learning.

4. There are learning outcomes – learners have an end product.

5. Tasks are authentic and therefore the language input is more authentic.

6. Interpersonal relations are developed through working as a group.

7. Content and methodology can be decided between the learners and the teacher and within the group, so the task is more learner-centred.

8. A break from routine and the chance to do something different.

9. A context is established which balances the need for fluency and accuracy.

10. The learners’ awareness of non-verbal communication is raised and their use of natural language is improved.

Some disadvantages of presentations are as follows:

1. The difficulty is often in the choice of the material. There are several billion pages of content and that number is constantly growing all the time. Therefore one of the most important skills to develop is that of effective searching.

2. Students use too detailed illustrations in their slides and write out the whole essays.

3. Learners also find it difficult to convert written language into spoken and include the correct terminology required by their subject. Some students start reading a prepared text and the length and complexity of the sentences make it difficult for other students to follow the speech.

4. It is also very difficult to sustain a presentation of any duration without some kind of written prompt.

5. The typical problem is that it is difficult for students to fit the topic into the time limit set.

Research results

The research was conducted with 108 students of computing and information technology. Prior to delivering a 10-minute presentations students had to give short 3-minute presentations, so they had a good practice and the teacher was able to guide students’ preparation and analyse learners’ difficulties. Learners were allotted three weeks to prepare and discuss their presentations. They were completely free to choose the topic and the material.

Learners’ attitude to the choice of the topic was analysed by administering a self-assessment questionnaire. Survey findings are shown in a bar figure below (Fig).

The bar figure 1 indicates that the majority of respondents (35 %) base their choice of the topic on a relevant topic. 31 % of the students prefer to choose the subject of the presentation by combining the topic in which they have been interested and the previous experience they have had in the subject. A random choice while surfing the web is considered less important (19 %). In choosing the topic the experience is of minor importance (15 %).
Conclusions

The presentation should be viewed as a process consisting of the appropriate number of preparation stages to make it as effective as possible. Each stage has some impact on the learning process and is of equal importance. While assessing students’ knowledge the teacher has to consider and evaluate the whole process required to prepare a presentation. On the whole, students need to develop a strategy for structuring their presentations.

The introduction of advantages and disadvantages of Power Point presentations helps the teacher to better integrate the presentation into the learning process. Presentations allow students to develop all four skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing). Transforming oral presentations into written assignments expands the activity making the presentation more effective.

The individual choice of the subject helps to promote successful research strategies and increase motivation.

References


