Presentation Content Structuredness: How does It Affect the Audience?

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Abstract

There are still many educators who cannot utilize PowerPoint slides appropriately. Teacher commonly construct slides full of text, except those that are meant to show text examples, that will not impress the audience. The current study aimed to examine whether or not presentation content structuredness had a significant effect on audience engagement. Professional experience shows that many people making presentations fail in their mission because they have problems with this issue. In their study, the use of different media affects the way the audience concludes the materials, but none of them comprehend

1. INTRODUCTION

In academic settings, presentations are important for sharing knowledge and ideas with students. Presentations become the key factor to the success of information delivery and audience engagement (Hosen et al., 2021; Qiu & Jiang, 2021). Even though there are lots of media utilized by practitioners that provide varied types of presentation formats, the content-related emphasis is considered as one of the crucial aspects to build audience engagement (Murtafiah et al., 2020; Irwansyah et al., 2017; Novita, 2020). That it is not merely about the tools of presentation that affect the message delivery, but it is more about the communication preference (Ahmed & Khan, 2021; Moulton et al., 2017). In their study, the use of different media affects the way the audience concludes the materials, but none of them comprehend
the contents differently. It implies that constructing an easy-to-follow presentation can build a better understanding. Previous research found that facilitative feedback, the one which provide clear explanations on PowerPoint slides, could build a more relevant content to understand (Cullen et al., 2018; Fichten et al., 2019). In short, when the audience grasps knowledge and ideas comprehensively, the delivery process is considered effective.

In the context of using Microsoft PowerPoint medium in a presentation, material delivery is affected by how the content is structured through the slides (Dewi & Izzati, 2020; Gowasa et al., 2019; Mahanani et al., 2013). It is argued that the quality of the content being presented is one of the important aspects to support the audience to comprehend the materials because they tend to rely on it when attending an academic presentation (Dewi & Izzati, 2020; Sfenrianto et al., 2018). In research on how the presentation tools affect messages, the quality content of a presentation has a significant value on the audience's understanding (Kwon & Kudrowitz, 2018). The concept is better to grasp when the ideas are structurally delivered, whatever the types of media are. Moreover, one classification of presentations was to engage audience’ understanding by providing contents in a student-directed way (Dukhan et al., 2019). Inferring from the study, “content” aspect is necessary to be considered when making presentation slides. In other words, it is a matter of well-structured presentations that later build the audience's engagement and comprehension.

As aforesaid, the literature and related studies have indicated that a successful presentation needs optimum preparation. As a wise word says, “Well begun is half done”. Presentations are not merely about the presentation slides, the PowerPoint, and the like. Therefore, it is not only about interesting presentation slides. Slides, power-point, posters, or the like, are tools that will function optimally when they are operated well by humans (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017; Cinches et al., 2017; Obidina et al., 2020). It is in line with an old phrase that says “Man behind the gun”. However, there are still many educators who cannot utilize PowerPoint slides appropriately. They commonly construct slides full of text, except those that are meant to show text examples, that will not impress the audience. It tends to show monotony, poor mastery, and lack of eye contact with the audience. This statement is supported by a study, that the number of slides in a lecture does not affect the teaching effectiveness (Brock et al., 2011). In term of PowerPoint design and content, while the visual aids were more favored, the text inefficiency was complained by the audience (Uzun & Kilis, 2019; Wijayanti & Christian Relmasira, 2019). In other words, simple slides containing some points organized in such a way in an effort to manipulate the audience's attention can build their engagement.

The research on learning efficacy through Microsoft PowerPoint slides, the use of PowerPoint slides enhances students’ understanding in processing knowledge (Wijayanti & Christian Relmasira, 2019; Zuraida & Ibrahim, 2018). It implies that creating well-structured presentation slides using Microsoft PowerPoint can be one of the crucial factors in building student learning engagement as it is useful for effective learning. Materials put in the presentation have impact on the audience’s memory. Dealing with audience engagement and comprehension in academic presentations, presentation slides are as important as the speech delivered by the presenters as they can promote student engagement as part of democratic education (Westman & Bergmark, 2018; Wijayanti & Christian Relmasira, 2019). By considering technical aspects such as constructing a consistent and organized format, a meaningful presentation will be achieved. Meaningful presentation here is defined as providing informative and easy-to-read materials. To do this, critical skills are needed by presenters, as the messages intended to share are expected to be received by the audience comprehensively. Well-structured slides positively affect the audience’s understanding and memory (Garner & Alley, 2013; Nagmoti, 2017). They argued that this factor can be explained by the mental model theory. Their experimental research compared the learning
outcomes of students who viewed materials presented through the slides in which the main message is followed by visual evidence (assertion-evidence) and of those who viewed materials through common-default slides. The results showed that the students who viewed assertion-evidence formatted sides performed better in some aspects of writing.

Although presenters find it easier to talk through topic-subtopic presentation slides that are commonly defaulted in Microsoft PowerPoint slides. Focusing on giving what is easier for the audience to accept needs to be embraced to change the perspective of only creating what is easier for the presenter to deliver when generating presentation slides (Bond & Bedenlier, 2019; Sakulin et al., 2021). Considering the common format of PowerPoint slides that is not constructed appropriately to support teaching effectiveness, the current study is focused on investigating how the assertion-evidence structure of Microsoft PowerPoint presentation slides can improve audience engagement and comprehension. The current study aimed to examine whether or not presentation content structuredness had a significant effect on audience engagement. The Academic Forum where a lecturer presents a specific subject-related topic to undergraduate English Language Education students was chosen as the setting of this study. The assertion-evidence formatted Microsoft PowerPoint slides were constructed to present a reference-related writing topic to 48 students. It was expected that this study would contribute to future technical presentations, especially for constructing what is easy for the audience to consume in its broader context, and in the academic or educational presentations, in specific.

2. METHOD

The data in this study were collected through tests and questionnaires. The tests were used to collect data on the audience’s knowledge (cognitive) and ability to write provided materials (psychomotor) in the training activity. The pre-test questions were not discussed on the D-day of the Academic Forum event. It was held as if there were no pre-tests before. It was expected that they would show a better performance on the post-test as they attended the material delivery in the Academic Forum event. The presentation in the Academic Forum event served as the “treatment” or intervention applied in experimental research. In this context, it was the lowest level of experimental research design called pre-experimental without a control group (Knapp, 2016). The questionnaires were used to gain the audience’s response about some aspects of the training held. It consisted of three closed items plus three open-ended items. The six items were related to the aspects of the suitability of the training materials with the audience’s needs, level of difficulty, benefits, preferences, betterment, and reflection of the input. Considering the pandemic condition, the tests and questionnaires were administered online using Google Form (Boni, 2020).

This study involved 48 undergraduate students registered as attendees of the Academic Forum event held by The Department of English Language Teaching, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. This time the materials dealt with academic referencing. Previously, the students were informed about the topic through a Telegram group application. Most of the students joining the activity was semester 8 students (58%). It is likely that the material is considered highly related to thesis writing. The data analysis in this study was initiated by assessing the attendees’ pre-test and post-test results. The assessment was conducted by two independent raters through inter-rater reliability to ensure consistent estimates. Average scores obtained from raters 1 and 2 were then analyzed using the t-test statistical tool. The t-test statistical analysis was used to compare two mean (average) scores, in this case, the mean score of the pre-test result and the mean score of the post-test result (Sukardi, 2008). Meanwhile, the closed-ended questionnaire responses were rated, coded, and categorized according to the theme that emerged.
The Academic Forum efficacy was viewed from the significant difference of the average score of pre- and post-activities through the t-test analysis. The result of the analysis was presented briefly in a summary table. When there was a significant difference, it could be implied that 1) the material delivery in the Academic Forum event was effective; 2) the scope of the materials is specific; 3) the materials were interesting and being awaited by the audience; 4) other possible factors. The result of the questionnaire response analysis was presented in pie charts. The impact of the event was measurable, so it could be used as a reference for relevant events, both at the department level and on a wider scale. The results of the questionnaire were qualitatively used as a part of the discussion in this study.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Results of the pre-test showed that the average score was 0.916 on a 0-to-5 scale. Meanwhile, the results of the post-test showed that the average score was 2.145. The data showed that the average score increased by 134.17%. Seen from the category, the attendees’ achievement in the pre- and post-tests was still low. However, the increase of average score that was more than doubled has shown that the undertaking of the academic referencing training had a huge effect on the attendees’ knowledge and skill of the presented material. The t-test was conducted to examine if the average scores (of pre- and post-tests) differed significantly. The t-value resulted from empirical data analysis (t-counted) was much larger than the-values listed on the t-table values. It statistically means that the average scores compared were significantly different. Since the score increased, in other words, it can be said that there was a significant effect of the undertaking of the Academic Forum event on the attendees’ academic referencing test result.

The data gained through the closed-ended questionnaire using a 5-point rating scale that required the attendees to assess the materials delivered in the event. Attendees gave positive response to any of those material aspects making up a quality forum or presentation. They perceived that the material delivered was relevant, easy to follow, and the one they needed. Based on the analysis result of open-ended responses requiring the attendees to give feedback, the theme categories are presented in the following Figures 1, 2, and 3.

![Figure 1. Most Impression Over Content and Delivery Aspects](image)
The chart displays that the attendees were impressed most by the presentation material (55%). The second place to impress them was the way the presenter delivered the material (21%).

**Figure 2.** Nearly-seventy-percent “satisfied” comments

As can be observed from the table, the majority of attendees addressed feedback that the forum, in general, was already good, that might mean the forum was well-managed, the speaker or source person was competent, etc. so that they found it hard to mention a single weakness. This could be considered as positive comment rather than feedback.

**Figure 3.** Ideal portion of absorbed material

From the attendees’ free response to how they took the benefit of the material delivered in the forum, most of them thought they had learnt in some different ways. Some stated they tried directly to write. Others commented they got started to write and felt fluent. It seemed these attendees reached a sense of accomplishment, more than a level of understanding and knowledge. This made up the biggest portion (learning how/ practice). Results of the study showed that the pre- and post-test scores remained unsatisfactory. Viewed from the standard applied in the academic guidelines issued by the institution where
the current study was conducted, scores 0, 1, and 2 belong to categories “Very Poor”, “Poor”, and “Fair”, respectively. So, the pre-test average score of 0.916 fell to level (slightly below) “Poor”. Meanwhile, the post-test average score of 2.145 fell to level (slightly above) “Fair”. Nevertheless, with regard to the increase from pre- to post-test results, which was up to 134%, then it can be said that the gain was huge. The result of t-test statistical analysis to check whether or not the increase was statistically significant, it revealed it was. True, the possibility for other factors to contribute their effect on the increase in academic referencing test result is open, as part of threat to validity of research design adopted (i.e., pre-experimental), and this, therefore, constitutes a limitation of this study. However, the increase was large and the t-test statistical analysis showed a convincing result. This is most likely attributed to the Academic Forum presentation, more specifically the deliberate effort by the presenter to get his presentation material well-structured, serving like a scenario prepared by a director in filmmaking, or a teacher in classroom teaching and learning process.

Discussion

Presentation materials also need to be considered as to whether they are simple, or too complicated to understand. (Antal et al., 2017; Novita, 2020). The material presented in the current study was relatively challenging. Besides the intra-system regulations, the inter-systems also need to be fulfilled. Writers need to follow those regulations appropriately based on the system adopted. Another challenge from the material is that people tend to view academic referencing as an unimportant issue (Bouton et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). For example, there are lots of papers containing unorganized references in that what is written in the text body does not suit the ones listed on the references, chaotic or inconsistency of reference writing, and last but not least, a strong indication of copy-paste misconduct. Based on this explanation, the current study can be used as the basis for recommendations for actions taken by academics in this respect. The researchers here intend to elaborate the results of this study by highlighting four main aspects, namely the content of a presentation that relates to student engagement, the structure of the content that affects student comprehension, the way a presenter delivers the content materials, and the implied meaning of the presentation structuredness itself. To begin with, it is crucial to put concern on what materials are being presented. The suitability, understandability, and contribution of the presentation materials, one of the results of this study has indicated that the content material is one of the important aspects in improving audience engagement. This result is in line with the previous studies, that found the quality content presented can affect audience engagement and comprehension (Kwon & Kudrowitz, 2018; Sfenrianto et al., 2018).

Adding to the mentioned result above, this study also has revealed that the structure of the content being presented significantly affects student comprehension. The difference between the pre-and post-test results measuring audience comprehension, the researchers concluded that it needs an appropriate structure to deliver content materials in a presentation. Looking back to the question items in the questionnaire, they were focused on what degree the audience could show in grasping the content of presentation. In other words, the modified PowerPoint presentation slides used in this study eased the audience to comprehend the materials (Dewi & Izzati, 2020; Gowasa et al., 2019; Wijayanti & Christian Relmasira, 2019). This result is in concordance with the previous studies, that found constructing easy-to-follow presentation can build a better understanding (Ahmed & Khan, 2021; Garner & Alley, 2013; Moulton et al., 2017; Nagmoti, 2017). Not to ignore, of course, there are still some other aspects that are not discussed in this study that may affect audience comprehension when attending a presentation.

Furthermore, engagement and comprehension can be supported by how the materials are presented. Some communication preferences affect audience engagement and
comprehension in attending a presentation. Previous research found that facilitative feedback, the one that provides clear explanations on PowerPoint slides, could build more relevant content to understand (Cullen et al., 2018; Fichten et al., 2019). In other words, the presentation tools will be more useful when the presenter function them optimally, in this case, is by modifying the content as well as the structure of the presentation. Additionally, it is implied that a presentation needs an appropriate, systematic, and well-structured display to tell the information embedded in it (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017; Cinches et al., 2017; Obidina et al., 2020). The audience reflection of the absorbed presentation materials, this study has revealed that a step-by-step structure can benefit the audience to comprehend the materials. This result is in line with the previous studies found that revealed the scaffolding process led the audience to grasp the knowledge better (Dick, 2021). In this study, the effect of the presentation materials’ structuredness was not only seen from how much the presentation material was gained by the audience but also from more comprehensive outcome, i.e., audience’s perception and voice. Results of the audience’ response on the Academic Forum (training) showed a positive effect that there was no aspect viewed as a drawback. Substantially speaking, the percentage of diversity in views and perceptions among attendees seemed ideal, for example, the audience’s voice concerning the content of the presentation which revealed the majority of the responses. The feedback given was mostly for betterment, which shows that the presentation was basically good, as nearly 70 percent of the attendees gave a response referring to “I am satisfied” theme.

4. CONCLUSION

The success of a presentation is met when the materials are structured appropriately. In this study, structuredness of the presentation content is the most important aspect leading to success in the presentation. Apart from the tools used in the presentation, structuring the presentation content as rational as possible by order, i.e., from simpler to complicated material (gradation), provision of examples and illustration to help clarify abstract aspects of academic referencing material, and the inclusion of visuals constitute wise efforts to draw audience’s attention, build engagement, get a better understanding, and help them with more intake of the presented material.

5. REFERENCES


