

**ANATOMY OF ORAL ACADEMIC PRESENTATION SKILLS:  
A COURSE DESIGN FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

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**Abstract**

The core concern of teaching in tertiary education is to enable college students to experience higher order of thinking in knowledge exploration that shape the students' academic identity. The focus of language proficiency in this context is not for communicative use in general but more specific to academic purposes such as research dissemination. This article explores essential components of a course design of Academic presentation Skills to facilitate research based learning. This article first discusses the inclusion of research based learning and teaching framework into Oral Academic Presentation Skills (OAPS) course. Before it portrays the course design of Research Based-Academic Presentation Skills, this Article identifies the drawbacks and the benefits of the course design. Furthermore, essential components of the OAPS such as learning objectives and, technology and online materials are discussed in order to provide a clear portrait of OAPS. Implication and suggestions for future researchers and course designers are also discussed.

Keywords: Anatomy, Oral Academic Presentation, Course Design

## **INTRODUCTION**

The core concern about teaching in tertiary education is to enable college students to experience higher order of thinking in knowledge exploration that shape the students' academic identity. Thus, in designing a course in a university such as Oral Presentation Skills teachers are demanded to facilitate students with academic research experiences cognitively and emotionally in their campus academic routines. As a result, the characteristics of English taught in a course should enable the students to act, feel and think as researchers in order to help shape the academic identity of the students. To facilitate this learning, teachers need to define what academic experiences are that students can undergo as they come into their social life after their study. So that, their identity as academics is reflected from their distinguished competency. With regard to the course of academic presentation skills, teachers as course designers first need to identify students' communications experiences that differ them from everyday communication in general.

The focus of language proficiency in this context is not for communicative use in general but more specific to academic purposes such as research dissemination (Gao & Bartlett, 2014), often called English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as the context of English use is Academic-Oriented Communication (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002, p.2). Thus, the Oral Presentation Course should be designed into Oral Academic Presentation skills Course with lexical, morphological and grammatical properties of language oriented to Academic contexts. However, academic characteristics should not stand alone and only be found in the language use but also be embedded in cognitive processes because the use of language is also a cognitive activity. There needs to be a research-based thinking in order to design an effective EAP course. This article explores the design of an Oral Academic Presentation skills course that facilitates these academic cognitive processing.

In the end of 2014, I was taking Research-Based Learning and Teaching which was a core course for my master degree that focused on education in higher education context. The core course provided me with experiences of designing learning experiences that ensures students research experiences in their tertiary education learning and ensure that college students apply higher order of thinking that can differ their learning in college from their secondary education. For the assessment of the course I performed academic presentation dealing with design of research based learning with blended learning design. The academic experiences inspire me to design a design of course in which students can immerse with fundamental elements of research. Thus, I plan to design courses with learning experiences that facilitate students with research activities and assessment that identify and ensure students' research-based oral presentation achievement.

### **FITTING WITH RESEARCH-BASED LEARNING DESIGN**

Research-Based Learning and Teaching (RBLT) is based on a paradigm that college students are regarded as the doers of academic discovery and dissemination (The Boyer Commission on Educating undergraduates in the Research University, 1998, p. 18). Students need to be guided and trained to master research skills from the beginning of their study. To bridge the students' research knowledge from secondary to tertiary, there need to be a bridging program in introductory program before entering tertiary education because teaching university students require an emphasis on academic English which is different from teaching general English that is learned outside of higher education contexts. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) contend that college students need to learn English which is specifically used in academic context namely English for Academic Purposes (EAP) that provide research knowledge and skills.

To facilitate research-based learning Research Development Skills (RSD) Framework is used to identify what research skills that students have developed. This framework also

plays role as a map for the students to understand their research experiences and development. The RSD consists of six fundamental facets with inter-related research skills namely *embark* which is related to the ability to formulate research questions, *find/generate* dealing with the ability to use appropriate methods and methodology to generate research data, *evaluate* collected data, *organize* the collected data, *synthesize* and *analyze* new understanding of knowledge, and finally *communicate* that is related to the ability to disseminate the research (Willison & O'Regan, 2007, p. 400). The research facets of RSD are then used to design the objectives of oral presentation course to help identify research skills achievements of college students. The RSD facets are also implemented in the assessment criteria to help students evaluate their achievements. Thus, students will be given self-control and responsibility for ideal markings that they are eager to attain. On other words, this assessment method can encourage students' learning autonomy that is fundamental for students' independent learning (Butler, 1999; Fazey & Fazey, 2001).

## **BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS**

### **Benefits**

The most fundamental of teaching students Oral Academic Presentation Skills (OAPS) is that the course design has a taste of research. This includes assurance that the course objectives aim at the provision of learning experiences that enable higher order of thinking because the thinking pattern experiences can help students reflect their identity as researchers a useful for later career. RSD enables the identification of intended level of research skills that the students should experience to the end of the course. Thus, the design using RSD can provide specific and clear descriptions to students dealing with their required achievement gained from the course and communicate the lecturers' expectation. Thus, students can have ownership to their learning and monitor their progress dealing with OAPS. The RSD also helps interpret the scoring system clearly so that students can make meaning of their achieved

scoring. For example, the students can identify what *B* means by looking up the assessment tool.

### **Drawbacks**

Immersing RSD into Oral Academic Presentation Skills requires a highly detailed design. Thus, it takes a huge amount and time for planning and preparation, the application and assessment. In the beginning of the course, it is necessary for course designers to comprehend the elements of RSD in order to design the objectives of the course. We need to ensure that students can experience a systematic thinking and activities that involve research skills such as critical thinking (Paton, 2011; Thompson, 1999). Furthermore, a tool for diagnostic assessment for the purpose of understanding English students' learning experiences can be analyzed for improving their learning experiences. Using online social media will be a great benefit for this purpose because there are a plethora of learning data that can be collected such as identification of students English communication skills and understanding the students' feelings and needs. However, both the students and lecturers have to learn and adapt with the use of technology and information media such as smart phones and the social media navigations. Otherwise, the technology and information potentially turns into an inhibiting factor of learning and teaching.

### **COURSE DESIGN**

The class is delivered with the integration of traditional class and social media. Sixteen meetings learning activities are documented in a set of papers with course objective, weekly learning themes, and percentages of assessment. The paper contains check list to help the students monitor their attendance and themes they have learned. Each learning themes is administer online in each week so students can gain prior-knowledge before they attend the class. Facebook is used as the social medium for weekly themes uploading because in this classroom context, the majority of the students have been accustomed with its tools and

navigation. The class chairman is requested to make a facebook group and invite all class members to participate in an initial everyday conversation to comfort students with online communication.

Six facets of RSD are used to formulate the objective of students' learning in order to enable the assessment and course evaluation. The RSD is applied in the formulation of learning objectives to clarify academic competencies students can achieve in Oral Academic Presentation Skills course. The expectations of the teachers need to be communicated through the process of formulation. Thus, the teachers are required set realistic and clear learning objectives. The learning objectives have to answer the questions dealing with what measurable students' academic achievements, expected academic cognitive process and expected academic products, students are expected to demonstrate within the six facets of RSD.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The learning objectives were formulated with RSD that emphasize six elements of research skills. Thus, it is expected that in the end of the course students will be able:

- (1) Embark: to identify academic presentation topics relevant to their study programs.
- (2) Find/generate: to generate appropriate and effective power point slides for an oral academic presentation such as the use of fonts, colors and content
- (3) Evaluate: to evaluate effective elements of oral communication for academic presentations such as gestures, eye contacts,
- (4) Organize: to demonstrate the ability to organize their research presentations in accordance to acceptable academic genre.
- (5) Analyze and synthesize:
- (6) Communicate: to communicate with appropriate use of academic words.

Because learning Oral Academic Presentation Skills requires higher order of thinking as students endeavor to actualize research experiences and disseminate research product, the learning is designed in a collaborative learning model. For mid-assignment, the students were doing collaborative work and they were grouped and instructed to find a thesis based on their

curiosities for knowledge exploration they plan to develop. The groups were subsequently instructed to prepare thesis presentations that were presented in groups. For Final assignment, the students were demanded to demonstrate their ability as described in learning objectives through their individual thesis presentations. With this learning model, the students are expected to construct their academic skills in the collaborative work prior to the demonstration of their personal performances.

### **TECHNOLOGY TOOLS AND ONLINE MATERIALS**

This course utilizes social media and the internet. The use of social media is intended to enable effective communication with the students because social media communication offers effectiveness of time and spaces. The students and lecturers do not need to meet face to face to communicate. Meanwhile, the use of internet is intended to search authentic OAPS materials. It enables the lecturers to select and use learning sources from high-class university around the globe. Herewith, a list that contains social media and internet sources used as learning and additional teaching media and materials:

1. Facebook

Each week students are obliged to write their reflective learning online through facebook group. The reflective practices are aimed at providing students' learning experiences, learning hindrances, prior-knowledge, feelings and needs. Thus, the reflective practice plays important role as diagnostic assessment. The Lecturers need to give feedback to students' comments to motivate and foster independent learning. As the students have different preferences for communicating their needs and learning issues, they are given several options for communication such as face to face, facebook inbox, and emails. To create positive learning environment, rules of ethical communication among members needs to be included. Communication in facebook group should not be dealing with trading, product promotions, offending comments, and violence.

## 2. Ted Talk

Ted talk is used with the purpose of providing students authentic materials of OAPS.

With this academic source, students learn the properties of academic language from native speakers such as English pronunciation. Students also benefit from learning natural gestures and mimicking facial expressions from the native presenters. In addition, the students learn the organization of ideas of the oral presentation and the design of powerpoint done by the presenter that is an expert in her field. The students, while watching the Ted Talk video, are instructed to observe and to learn from the presenter's performance. The video can be watched from this link.

## 3. Sample videos of Oral Academic Presentation Skills

Sample videos of academic presentation skills demonstrated by Australian college students are provided in the middle of the class for students to imitate the presentation of the Australian students. It is assumed that the videos can help understand the contexts of high-quality academic presentation skills because the students had experienced of learning an international world-ranking university. The most important aspect to highlight as students are observing the sample videos is the organization of ideas in the presentation. The students are instructed to identify important components of oral academic presentations. They need to analyze the methods used to communicate introduction of the issue, literature review, methodology, findings and implications. In my class practices, as some students needed assistances to understand the language use, I gave manuscript of the sample videos as students appear to struggle to understand it.

## **CONCLUSION**

In designing an Oral Academic Presentation Skills Course in higher education, ensuring university students to experience learning higher order of thinking is a need to help the students shape their scholarly identity. Thus, the course components including the learning objectives need to be designed with research based learning. Research Based Learning and

Teaching can be used to communicate the learning expectations through the formulation and immersion of its elements into learning objectives of Oral Academic Presentation Skills course. Furthermore, the use of information and technology is critical to the course design to establish more effective communication between students and students, and students and teachers. I utilized social media such as facebook to enable smooth communication to identify students' needs. I also provide students with presentations of outstanding scholars through online videos such as TED Talk and Sample Videos of Oral Academic Presentation Skills. The selected online videos have already been assessed for its content to communicate high expectation dealing with Oral Academic Presentation knowledge and skills. The design of the course is intended to inspire other teachers of Oral Presentation Skills when redesigning their courses to instill and strengthen their students' academic identity.

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