Academic Presentations:
What Faculty Want &
The Materials Students Need

Averil Bolster - averilbolster@gmail.com
Peter Levrai - peterlevrai@gmail.com
The Place of Academic Presentations

• Widespread part of student experience (Alexander, Argent and Spencer, 2008)

• Used in all Faculties in University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC)
Why Academic Presentations?

- Observation of presentations in UNNC
- Possible to deliver a technically good presentation but a poor academic presentation

Aims

- Determine the requirements of academic presentations
- Develop materials to enable students to succeed in the wide range of academic presentation tasks
Understanding Academic Presentations
What is known about Academic Presentations

- Identified presentations as a major type of academic oral discourse (Ferris & Tagg, 1996)

- Academic discourse socialization research (Zappa-Hollman, 2007)
  - Identified characteristics of academic presentations in 4 different disciplines

- Academic presentations are ‘an integral part of the network of academic genres’ (Zareva, 2009)
  - Still little known about their features
Building A Better Understanding

Faculty Interviews

Evaluate NNES Materials

Review NES Materials
Faculty Interviews

• Interviewed lecturers from

Arts, Education & Social Sciences
• Business
• Law
• Education
• English Studies
• International Studies

Science & Engineering
• Architecture
• Environmental Science
Interview Coverage

1. Why are student presentations used in higher education?

2. What kind of presenting and presentations do your students have to do?

3. What makes a good presentation for your division?

4. What makes a presentation academic?
Features of the Academic Presentation

- Demonstrates mastery of subject
- Research-based arguments
- Verifiable & Referenced
- Synthesised sources
- Time aware
- Encourage further discussion
Reviewing NES Training Materials
Reviewing NES Training Materials

- Understanding the Audience
- Dealing with Nerves
- Group Presentations
- Peer Assessment
- Using Your Voice
- Notes & Visual Aids
Evaluating NNES Materials

• Conducted a criteria driven evaluation of NNES presentation books (Tomlinson, 2007)
Sample Criteria: Academic

To what extent will learners be able to give presentations of different genres, e.g. problem-solution / research-based / presenting a journal article / poster presentation?

Are the learners likely to be able to avoid plagiarism when planning their presentations?

How likely will the learners be able to cite their sources effectively both orally and in visual aids?
Evaluating NNES Materials
NNES Evaluation Results

- University Foundations Study: Presentations
- Passport to Academic Presentations
- Giving Academic Presentations

Overall Impression
Criteria Score
Overall Score
NNES Evaluation Results: Criteria

- Course Design
- General Presentation Skills
- Academic Presentation Skills
- Language Support

Bar chart showing evaluation results for Passport to Academic Presentations and Giving Academic Presentations.
Introducing Academic Presenting & Presentations

A research-based course
Core Concept

Effective presentation skills alone will not lead to a successful academic presentation.
Course design

- Methodology informed by 3 threads

- Observe
- Hypothesise
- Experiment

- Genre

- Content-Based Instruction
## Genre Analysis
(Hyland, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction to Presentations</th>
<th>What is an Academic Presentation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presenting a Paper</td>
<td>Elevator Pitch Poster Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive Presentations</td>
<td>Presenting Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solution Presentations</td>
<td>Research Presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Content-Based Instruction (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010)

- Initial content around sustainability
- Developed into study skills

Presenting a Paper

Research

Problem-Solution

Plagiarism
Observe, Hypothesise, Experiment (Lewis, 1993)

- A video-led course
- All natural presentations with strengths and weaknesses

- 11 Sample Presentations
- 16 Learning Presentations

- \( \frac{1}{3} \) input, \( \frac{1}{3} \) preparation, \( \frac{1}{3} \) practice
The Persuasive Presentation

Being Persuasive In An Academic Presentation
Substance Over Style
Evaluation Comparison: Criteria

Course Design
General Presentation Skills
Academic Presentation Skills
Language Support
Conclusion

- Presentations are important area requiring further research
- Our contribution

Identified features lecturers value in presentations

Tool for evaluating academic presentation materials

‘Academic Presenting & Presentations’ Course
References


Thank You

Any questions?

averilbolster@gmail.com
peterlevrai@gmail.com