universität innsbruck

From Live to Online Presentations: Supporting Students to Acquire Video and Online Presentation Skills

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1. How COVID-19 changed the course content overnight

One main learning outcome of the course "Communication Skills for Business" is that management and economics students learn to present themselves in various traditional face-to-face communication formats, such as meetings, small group discussions and especially presentations. Due to COVID-19, the change from traditional classroom teaching to online teaching happened overnight in week 2 and therefore, all the course content that was related to live and face-to-face presentation skills had to be adjusted and adapted to online and videoconference presentation skills.

This poster focuses on how the presentation skills part for the end of term presentations were adapted: it shows how the presentation format was changed to online and video presentations, it outlines the step-by-step approach to acquire the necessary skills, what remained the same, what changed, and gives examples of students' progress, their voices and my impression.

2. End of term presentation: From live to online presentation

Normally at the end of the semester, teams of 3-4 students give a 30 to 40-minute interactive live presentation on a skills topic of their choice in which they give hands-on tips to their fellow students. A popular topic is for example "how to communicate across cultures" and a possible tip could be "learn the difference between collectivism and individualism to understand a culture better".

This semester, the live presentations became blended presentations: Some parts of the presentation were done live during the videoconference, such as the audience interaction or the transitions between the tips but the main content, namely the tips were shown as videos. Due to this blended scenario, students needed to acquire video presentation skills and use new presentation tools.

3. A step-by-step approach to acquire video and presentation skills

As of week 2, students had to prepare a 4-minute talk on a topic of their choice for almost each videoconference session. For their first talk, students had the chance to speak live in front of one person in a breakout room during the videoconference. From then on, they filmed their talks before the videoconference session but watched each other's videos and gave feedback to each other in the online session.

With each video, students were asked to integrate a new presentation skills aspect.

4. Presentation skills content: What remained the same, what changed

When it comes to traditional presentation skills contents, such as body language, voice, presentation structure, etc. little had to be changed in terms of content but the form of delivery changed: In class, I often demonstrate aspects of body language and everyone stands up, walks around and we do activities together. During lockdown, not everyone could have their camera on all the time. Additionally, changing the camera angle from close-up to full body shot turned into some privacy issues. Not everyone felt comfortable with revealing too much of their private home. Therefore, I made videos for students (see https://padlet.com/birgit02/IUT20poster for examples) and they handed in their videos – both cases allowed for an appropriate or at least acceptable setting so that everybody could choose how much of their home they would like to show.

	Body language, voice, presentation structure	Audience interaction	Visuals and presentation tools
What remained the same	Basics of posture, use of gestures and voice, presentation structure and how to make an impact at the beginning and end of your presentation	Building up audience interaction (from show of hands to one-word answers to open questions)	Basics of slides: Less is more Flip chart: Make it dynamic by adding information during talk
What had to be adapted or added	Eye connection: Students had to learn to focus on the camera Body language depends on video shots (close-up vs full body shot)	The need for and nature of interaction, e.g. brief physical exercises, during presentation increased	New presentation tools for videos, such as Prezi video and Screencast-o-matic or Nearpod for interactive online presentations. Due to lack of flip chart at home, new visual formats
Tips students found particularly helpful	• Stick a photo of someone you like to talk to above your camera.	• Let your audience combine answers with physical exercises, e.g. „if you answer with yes, make 3 squats".	• Watch the screencasts on the use of Nearpod and Prezi video • Use the discussion forum to share your experience and give tips to one another

To watch some video material on students' progress and some of my material, please go to https://padlet.com/birgit02/IUT20poster

Step-by-step flow

Students' 4-minute speech's / video's content: | **Peer and teacher feedback in videoconference sessions on:** | **Activities and input in and between sessions on:**

- **Step 1** — Topic of choice. Aim: Figure out status quo | Fluency, structure | How to give feedback; structure and sign-posting language
- **Step 2** — Topic of choice. Aim: Improve structure and Signposting language | Structure, Signposting language | Your personal presentation type, posture, gestures
- **Step 3** — Topic of choice or body Language (BL) Aim: improve BL | Body language (BL) | Further input on BL, use of voice, tips for videos
- **Step 4** — Rhetorical techniques or use of voice. Aim: Practise BL, voice | BL and use of voice, structure, etc. | Ethos, pathos, logos & further rhetorical techniques
- **Step 5** — Presentation topic Aim: Use ethos, pathos, logos | Content, structure, BL | Start and end with a bang and have a presentation theme
- **Step 6** — Presentation topic Aim: Bring all aspects together | Strengths and what could be improved | Audience interaction & presentation tools
- **Step 7** — FINAL BLENDED TEAM PRESENTATION | FEEDBACK ON OVERALL PERFORMANCE

5. Useful presentation tools for online and video presentations

Besides the videoconferencing tool, students needed additional digital tools for the blended presentation scenarios. To not overwhelm them, they were introduced to the following three tools:

Prezi video ☺ easy to use, professional appearance ☹ only one free private video
Screencast-o-matic ☺ easy to use ☹ talking head is rather small and size cannot be changed
Nearpod ☺ all-in-one media presentation tool with various activities for audience interaction

6. Students' and teacher's comments

The online presentation showed us how presentations will look like in future and it was great to try this out in class. I learned how to manage online presentations and how to work out a system that works.
Student on his take-away

After I saw which "mistakes" the others make, I tried to avoid these in my next video. For example, the wrong position of the camera or the wrong background. But also, the volume or speech melody of their voice.
Student on step-by-step approach

I think if you're not already doing this, everyone should make videos of themselves.
Student on what to keep/change in future

"In hindsight it seems that I as a teacher made only a few simple and obvious changes but those changes, especially making videos, was time consuming. I am grateful that my students reacted overwhelmingly positive to the changes and were flexible because I couldn't tell them at the beginning of the semester what the final presentation would be like. The new situation we faced helped us all to develop our skills and grow together."

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