

EAP WORKSHOP REPORT (NO.2)
Textbook Seminar
‘Successful Presentations: An Interactive Guide’
(by Prof. Mark D. Stafford)

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Abstract

As the author of the core textbook for the EAP 2 course, Mark Stafford was invited to give a seminar in which he introduced the content of the textbook and gave ideas on how he thought it might best be used as part of the EAP 2 syllabus. The author is a professor of English at Ehime University, where he teaches, among other courses, presentation. He has also authored a number of other textbooks. The seminar was held on February 16th, 2016, and was attended by 20 members of staff. The following report details the seminar proceedings.

金沢大学は平成28年度より新しい共通教育カリキュラムによる英語教育をはじめ。そこで、今回の KAP ワークショップでは、EAPII で使用する教科書 Successful Presentation (センゲージラーニング) の著者である Mark D. Stafford 愛媛大学准教授をお招きし、教科書の使い方とプレゼンテーションを教える授業の運営方法に関するセミナーを開催した。Stafford 准教授には、金沢大学の8週間単位の新カリキュラムの中で、この教科書を効果的に使う方法についても提案して頂いた。ここでは、そのまとめを報告する。(日本語要旨 文責 大藪)

Introduction

Professor Stafford began the seminar by outlining why he had written the textbook, stating the following reasons:

He wanted a textbook of a suitable length for the presentation course he teaches at Ehime University, which the available published textbooks were not.

He wanted it to be simple to use, and flexible in terms of lesson themes. Again, he noted that many of the textbooks currently available did not allow for this, but rather had fixed topics and themes for each chapter.

Many presentation textbooks are aimed at students of business English, not university students. As the materials and topics in these are often of little interest or relevance to university students, he wanted something that would be more appropriate to the context.

He wanted a textbook that introduced presentation skills step by step and revisited the skills learnt, one that was in his words ‘accretive’. He noted that many of the available textbooks failed to provide this, but rather focused on a skill one time only, providing little or no opportunity to reuse it.

Important points of presentation

Presenting is a 2-way form of communication, so it is important to make students aware that it is not just about the presenter giving information, but also being able to read the audience. This involves techniques such as using eye contact to engage the audience, and also to gauge their response to your presentation, for example, are they bored? Can they hear you clearly? Are you talking too fast?

It is important that instructors be aware of their expectations of students. As the course is relatively short, it is unrealistic to expect students' linguistic ability to improve drastically. Also, some students' language will be a lot higher level at the start of the course than others. Therefore, it is necessary to reward content rather than linguistic proficiency to ensure all students have a more equal chance.

Below are what the author believed to be the 3 main areas to consider when teaching presentation skills, those which form the skeleton of a good presentation:

Delivery- this includes aspects such as eye contact, stage position, gesture, etc.

Content- including the structure, useful phrases for linking, signposting expressions, etc.

Visual aids- making good use of slides as an aid to the presentation, but not main focus.

Content and layout of the textbook

As is clear from the contents page, the textbook content is divided according to the 3 areas noted above (delivery, content & visual aids). With each of the chapters in the textbook following the same format, the author used chapter 1 as a means of familiarising the instructors with this. The following summarises the various points that were introduced, along with suggestions on how to approach them:

Each chapter starts by focusing on an aspect of delivery, which in chapter 1 is posture. For this, the author suggested having students standing in front of their partner and trying to adopt a natural, comfortable pose, then have partners comment. It was suggested that doing much of the physical posture exercises covered in later chapters might also be best done in pairs, while for eye contact, the author recommended having the whole class stand in a circle in silence for a couple of minutes making eye contact with each other.

Delivery is followed by discussion points for students, which the author recommended doing in groups and just picking one or two of the given questions. Regarding content, chapter 1 focuses on introductions, so gives a sample introduction with useful expressions. It also provides a framework for students to fill in and practice introducing themselves to their group.

In terms of peer evaluation, it was noted that there is only one sheet per chapter, so it may be best to make photocopies if students are to evaluate each member of their group. As a way round this, self-evaluation was recommended.

(This brought in a short discussion on the best way to approach peer evaluation. The author's suggestions included keeping it anonymous (although the point was raised that it would still

be clear whose comments were whose), being honest, as doing so would be in the best interests of the person receiving the comments, and giving a verbal evaluation, although this was admittedly difficult.)

As a means of exemplifying the accretion noted earlier, the framework in chapter 1 was compared with chapter 5. The students can see the whole presentation plan in the first chapter, but only have to fill in the top part (in green). By chapter 5, the planning grid is the same, but more of it is coloured green. It also shows that each time they are asked to plan a presentation, the students get to use the introduction, not just in the first chapter.

Proposal for use within the EAP 2 syllabus

Although the textbook was originally intended to be used over a 15 week course, the author proposed how it might best be used within the 8-week EAP 2 course, noting that within this, there are the midterm and final exams to account for, so 6 weeks of classes. It was strongly recommended that units 1-8 be prioritized, while the remaining units, along with the Q&A and review sections, could be ignored. In order to get through 8 chapters, it was proposed that 2 chapters a week be covered in weeks 1 and 2. An outline of how this might be achieved is given below, with the same format applied to chapters 3 and 4 in week 2.

Delivery	p.9 + p.15
Content	p.11 + p.17
Visual aids	p.13 & p.19
Preparing	p.12 + p.18
Performing	p.14 + p.20

(Assessment)

Again, as the course is too short to expect much linguistic improvement, the need to focus the assessment on content rather than linguistic ability was stressed. Using the performance evaluation sheets in the textbook as a guide to which criteria should be considered for assessment was suggested. Examples of how these might be used for both the midterm and final exam were given. The importance of limiting the number of criteria was also highlighted; if there are too many, the marker has no chance to listen to the actual presentation as they are too busy assigning grades. It was also noted that while it is easier and faster to grade group presentations (with a grade given per group), it is fairer on students to assess them individually. The reasoning behind this was that whoever gets the introduction or conclusion has a comparatively easy but short section, and so less to grade; the middle sections have more content to work with. One final point relating to assessment concerned the importance of keeping time and preventing students' presentations going over the allotted time. Here, the author simply recommended setting a timer and being strict.

In summary

In summarizing, the importance of a number of factors was re-emphasized. These included:

Remembering that presentations are a form of communication between the presenter and the audience, not just a one way flow of information.

Making eye contact. The author mentioned that, from his own experience, this had proven to be especially difficult for students to adopt.

Not allowing students to write a script and read it to the audience. Instead, have them use cards with brief notes.

Using simple visual aids, and keeping the visuals as a tool, not the main feature of the presentation.

Having the students give mini presentations within their groups throughout the course in order to get the accustomed to presenting. The value of changing the groups each class was also brought up in order to prevent students feeling as though they are always grouped with people they may not get along with.

Q & A

During the Q & A session following the presentation, a number of topics were brought up. These included:

Q: If we are to grade students on content rather than linguistic ability, what constitutes content?

A: Content refers to aspects such as eye contact, stance, use of visuals and other areas that are covered within the course.

Q: Is there anything in the textbook that can be used for homework?

A: Much of the textbook content is based around group discussion, so isn't really conducive to individual homework. However, having the students prepare overviews of their presentations and slides in preparation may work.

Q: Would you recommend showing students example presentations?

A: No. Watching a professional level presentation may be setting too lofty a goal and may be demotivating. Rather, it is better to have them gradually build up towards a full presentation.

Q: What would you recommend for students who get especially nervous?

A: This issue is addressed in the textbook, where the main advice is to focus on breathing, something. Good preparation is also invaluable. (The author commented that often the shyest students give the best presentations, possibly as a result of more thorough preparation.)