

**PECHA KUCHA STYLE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION:
AN INNOVATIVE CALL APPROACH
TO DEVELOPING ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS
OF TERTIARY STUDENTS**

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Abstract

In computer-assisted language learning (CALL), technological tools are often used both as an end and as a means to an end (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Microsoft PowerPoint is an example of the latter as it is commonly used in oral presentations in classrooms. However, many student presentations are often boring as students generally read from text-heavy PowerPoint slides. Such presentations do not assist students in developing their oral presentation skills. Pecha Kucha (PK) is an innovative and creative PowerPoint presentation format that can help to overcome this. It features the use of twenty slides containing visuals with minimal text that are presented in twenty seconds.

This study reports on the use of the PK presentation format to enhance the development of second language (L2) oral presentation skills among tertiary students at Universiti Sains Malaysia. It was carried out among thirty distant learners who worked in groups to complete a task-based activity using the PK format. Data were gathered from students' focus group interview responses as well as the researcher's observations to inform the impact of this format on the development of presentation skills and the challenges faced in employing it.

Findings revealed that while the format is functional in supporting collaborative learning and fostering L2 oral presentation skills, it posed challenges to students with low proficiency levels. To maximise the potential benefits of PK as a CALL strategy, this study, therefore, suggests the inclusion of more pedagogical support and training.

Keywords: Pecha Kucha; PowerPoint presentation; oral presentation skills; tertiary students

1. Introduction

The call for effective oral communication skills in this digital and globalization era is deafening. Major conceptual framework for 21st century skills such as the Partnership for 21st century skills (P21) and the Engauge Framework have determined effective communication, which includes speaking, as an inevitable skill to acquire (Dede, 2010). Accordingly, the need to develop speaking competencies that include oral presentation skills

is immeasurable. Language instructors in tertiary institutions are, therefore, pressured to assist students in acquiring these skills that would be crucial when they join the work force in the future. It is an even more arduous task when students are L2 learners as their skill acquisition is hampered by, among others, the lack of opportunities and motivation to speak in L2. Language instructors have to be creative and innovative in providing appropriate tasks for harnessing speaking skills. CALL approaches are increasingly employed for this purpose.

Oral presentation in language learning is customary in most tertiary institutions. PowerPoint software, which is popularly used to support oral presentations, not only reflect students' content mastery but also their presentation skills. The software is widely utilized due to its user-friendly features. Yet, its use does not commensurate with an enhancement of oral presentation skills. Weaknesses related to dismal presentations abound. Students' demonstrations of slides that are far too many and too complex with little consideration for an engaging presentation are common. Focusing on less important information rather than critical points, reading from crammed slides and exceeding the time allocated for presentations reflect poor oral presentation skills. In fact there is general agreement in literature that support this claim (Tomsett and Shaw, 2014; Oliver and Kowalczyk, 2013; Levin and Peterson, 2013; Lehtonen; 2011; Artyushina et al., 2010; Anderson and Williams, 2012; Johnson, 2012). Many forget that PowerPoint software is just a CALL tool and that the message does not come from the slides but rather from the presenter who must maximize the use of the slideware and convey the message effectively to the audience (Johnson, 2012). Hence, students must be exposed to new ways of exploring the software that would lead to better oral presentation skills.

One way to achieve this is through the utilization of the Pecha Kucha presentation style. Pecha Kucha (PK), which means "the sound of conversation" or "chitchat" in Japanese, refers to a presentation format that is well-prepared, fast and concise. It was created in 2003 by architects Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham, who hoped to give young designers an opportunity to present their work in a short and fast-paced environment (Oliver and Kowalczyk, 2013). In a PK presentation, each presenter is only allowed 20 PowerPoint slides to be shown for 20 seconds each on a timer. In other words, a presenter has only 20 seconds to discuss each slide before the next slide appears, limiting the presentation time to 6 minutes and 40 seconds. Ideas are explained visually with pictures and graphics with little text on slides.

The present paper probes the maiden use of PK among distant learners learning English in a Malaysian university. More specifically, it aims to examine the impact of this format on students' oral presentation skills. Additionally, it examines the challenges faced when implementing and using this presentation strategy. Insights gained from the current study will be valuable in evaluating PK's potentiality in enhancing oral presentation skills in language learning in the future.

2. Literature review

2.1. PowerPoint presentations as CALL material

The current proliferation of technological tools augurs well for CALL, which has been used to reinforce teaching and learning in the classroom and help students with limited language proficiency (Wang & Chang, 2011). Communication tools such as iPads (Lys, 2013), audio blogs (Hsu, Wang & Comac, 2008) and podcasts (Travis & Joseph, 2009; Sze, 2006) have in recent times been extensively employed, particularly in developing oral competencies. According to Levy and Stockwell (2006), however, the technologies used in CALL extend beyond communication tools to include generic tools and devices such as word processors, online dictionaries and MP3. They argue that although technological tools are often used directly, some are also used indirectly for learning, as a means to an end (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Hence, CALL materials can be referred to as artefacts that "encompass tasks, software, courseware, websites" (p. 2) and other products that are created by the language teacher using technological resources. CALL activities would then include using e-mail, software and electronic conferencing systems as well as creating WebQuests and webpages (Egbert, 2002). It is vital to bear in mind that a CALL task must afford "the opportunity to use the target language in ways that learners will be called upon to do as language users" (Levy & Stockwell, 2006, p. 89). Adopting these views, the present paper reports the use of *PowerPoint* as a CALL material to develop oral presentation skills in a language classroom.

2.2. Criticisms of using PowerPoint in Classrooms

PowerPoint has become synonymous with oral presentations in classrooms. The visual display of sequential slides demonstrating texts using bullet points and clip art is ubiquitous during student presentations. While some students employ *PowerPoint* slides creatively making their presentations lively and interesting, many others have slides which are poorly designed. Many present a summary instead of making and supporting an argument (Levin and

Peterson, 2013) or focus on trivial information rather than critical points and present far more than the allotted time (Oliver & Kowalczyk, 2013). Reading from crammed texts and the overuse of bullet points hinder them from presenting their ideas coherently or speaking effectively and confidently in front of large groups (Artyushina et al., 2010, Gaskin, 2007). All these do not contribute to the development or enhancement of oral presentation skills. Furthermore, such presentations cause listeners to feel frustrated and bored (Anderson and Williams, 2012). Harman (2010) went further to describe them as a waste of time and an excruciatingly boring experience. It comes as no surprise then for Garber (2011) to aptly name such presentations as 'Death by *PowerPoint*'.

2.3. Pecha Kucha Style *PowerPoint* Presentation

Despite the criticisms levelled at boring *PowerPoint* presentations, the blame lies not with *PowerPoint* as a tool but with the presenter. If what is critical is the presenter, not the technology (Hardin, 2007) and if software programs are limited "only by our imaginations" (Brown, 2007), then students must be taught to break out of the normal *PowerPoint* box and attempt new presentation formats. Pecha Kucha is one such format, which has taken the world by storm. Although it has gained prominence in the corporate world namely in presenting a novel design, solution or simply sharing an idea, it is also being increasingly used in tertiary education to promote and enhance oral presentation skills in language learning. The fact that it can be used for varied purposes in a composition class (Gries and Brooke, 2010), for thesis presentation (Chikushi et al., 2009) and as a research project presentation (Stoblein and Kanet, 2008), enables it to be applied across the curriculum (Anderson and Williams, 2012).

Several studies have demonstrated the benefits of PK in university settings. One benefit is the improvement in student presentation quality. According to Levin and Peterson (2013), the rigid structure of PK forces students to focus and think of key components that should be included in their presentations. The format facilitates argumentative presentations as well as promotes engaging presentations. Johnson (2012) incorporated PK in his 'Professional Presentations' class and found that not only did the graduate students focus on key points, but they also managed to engage the audience more in the discussion. He also reported on an English teacher who adopted PK in her literature class and found the use of this style of presentation increased her students' interest and participation. Similar findings were also reported by Beyer et al. (2012), who claim that PK-style presentations are interesting because presenters avoid reading from slides. They seem to be more familiar with the materials and, thus, commit fewer mistakes. Related to this, Oliver and Kowalczyk (2013)

express the opinion that because students can no longer rely heavily on texts, they have to practise presenting to ensure they emphasize key points and keep to the time limit. In other words, by using PK students are taken out of their comfort zone. In another study, Beyer (2011) compared traditional *PowerPoint* presentations and those using PK, finding out that the latter obtained higher instructor rating. The presentations were better overall due to better eye contact with listeners and the effective use of visuals.

It must be noted that the format is also flexible in terms of content although it is rigid structurally, thus making it suitable to be used for individual or group presentations. Literature posits that group work would encourage active student engagement (Kessler and Bikowski, 2010). This engagement involves behavioural (such as task completion), emotional (for example, sharing of optimism, confidence or fear) and cognitive (for instance, the use of strategies) dimensions that would lead to knowledge construction in language learning (Yang, 2011). These features have prompted some researchers to adopt the PK format for group work: Anderson and Williams (2012) as well as Stoblein and Kanet (2008) have used PK effectively for their undergraduate group project presentations. Their findings reveal that students prefer group presentations as they would have spent more time preparing an individual PK presentation. In another study, Artyushina et al. (2010) used the format in an English course at a Russian technical university and found that it helped students not only develop their oral presentation skills but also build teamwork. While preparing for a PK-style group presentation, students work collaboratively not only by brainstorming, discussing and outlining their presentation, but also by gathering visual materials and practising their presentation. Smith (2012) requested her postgraduate students to employ the PK format for their group presentations and found that interactions also encourage students to attempt using the target language with their group members. They can help and check each other's language use.

Furthermore, a PK-style of presentation can improve student retention of material presented by reducing cognitive load. Complexity of information and the manner in which it is presented can overload listeners' processing capacity; thus diminishing retention and comprehension of the material (Huang & Johnson, 2008). As Mayer and Moreno (2003) affirmed, presenting large clips of information on *PowerPoint* slides affects student retention. Those who are subjected to information-laden presentations perform worse than those who are not. On the other hand, when concise slides are presented, the rate of retention of information is better (Savoy et al., 2009). In addition, as the PK presentation involves the use of concise slides, it helps improve language skills. For example, Gries and Brooke (2010)

incorporated PK to assist writing instruction. Students were required to present their project work using the PK format prior to submitting their final written report. It was revealed that the format helped the students in revising their arguments in their written reports, particularly in the organization and development of ideas. Information that was not significant was also omitted. These researchers argue that practice, preparation for and audience feedback in PK presentations are valuable in helping students improve both their oral presentation and writing skills. Christianson and Payne (2011) summed up the benefits of PK format by claiming that most of the participants of their study found it enjoyable and useful as it requires them to focus on their points, forces presenters to practice more and helps the audience to stay engaged. The researchers also pointed out the drawback of higher degree of pressure students face as they have to practice hard to ensure a smooth presentation using a rigid format.

Although the use of PK as a student presentation format in tertiary institutions abounds in many nations, it is not the case in Malaysia. That PK is still at its infancy in Malaysia prompted the present researcher to conduct a study on its potentiality in a Malaysian institution.

3. The study

3.1. Background of the study

This paper reports on the use of PK among distant learners undertaking an English proficiency course at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). At the School of Distance Education (SDE) USM, English proficiency courses are compulsory for all students. The English course they start with depends on their Malaysian University English Test (a pre-requisite for university entry) results. Those with Bands 1-3 (low-proficiency levels) are required to register for the basic course and progress to the higher levels whereas those with bands 4-6 (high proficiency levels) begin with a higher-level course. Thus, students signing up for a higher English course do not necessarily possess similar levels of proficiency. As distant learners, students attend classes via video conferencing at a regional centre closest to them. They also interact with their instructors via the learning management system (the e-portal). Students attend the Intensive course in the main USM campus for several weeks yearly for face-to-face meetings with their peers and lecturers.

As most of these distant learners are working adults, one may assume that their work experience and maturity would be reflected in the presentation of a given speaking task. However, this is not the case. Students do not prepare well and key points are only presented

superficially without in-depth discussion and elaboration. They basically read from their *PowerPoint* slides with little concern for the time allocated. Although the instructor had elaborated on oral presentation skills in her lessons by modelling a good presentation and providing participants with links to websites that could help them develop their presentation skills, her efforts had been futile as there was little improvement in their presentations. This prompted the instructor to try out the PK format with her students. It must be pointed out that her students had not been exposed to PK before. She hypothesized the new presentation style would compel her students to think critically, plan thoroughly and present effectively. The rationale was it would provide a creative environment for students to present their topic critically and in an interesting manner.

3.2. The aim of the research

Adopting a social constructivist learning approach, the researcher believes PK style of presentation based on group work would contribute to the development of oral presentation skills among distant learners at SDE. Apart from that, as PK was a new *PowerPoint* presentation format for the students, it would be imperative to identify any problems they faced in using it. The research questions that form the basis of the study are therefore as follows:

1. How does the use of PK impact students' oral presentation skills?
2. What are the challenges faced in preparing a PK style presentation?

3.3 Design and procedure

In this study, the qualitative approach was adopted on the basis that qualitative research examines the naturalistic setting in which a learning experience takes place (Zagal & Bruckman, 2010). Rather than focusing on outcomes, it would provide rich insights into participants' experiences, therefore being more meaningful. Moreover, it is suggested that the qualitative method should be used in situations where variables are still relatively unknown. By identifying them, one can then test them quantitatively (Hoepfl, 1997). Hence, qualitative research is apt for the current study as the purpose is to examine the experience of distant learners in using a novel oral presentation strategy in their language course.

Thirty intermediate English course students (12 males and 18 females) aged between 25 and 52 years participated in the study. Their writing group assignment was used as a basis for a PK-style presentation, and six groups comprising five students each were involved. Although students were given the liberty to select their own members for the assignment, they

were helped by the instructor to ensure their group members' proficiency levels were varied as she believes collaboration would promote language learning. It is compulsory for all students, regardless of their MUET scores, to take English proficiency courses. Their mixed proficiency levels were due to the fact that they gain entry to a higher course either directly (due to a higher proficiency level) or after obtaining a pass in their lower English course (due to a lower proficiency level).

The data sources used for the study were interviews and instructor observations. A focus group interview was conducted for each group of students after their presentations. The aim was to gather information regarding students' experience of using the PK format. Their responses were transcribed and statements that relate to the development of oral presentation skills and to the challenges faced were identified and categorized according to the themes that emerged. They were later thematically analysed. The instructor, on the other hand, observed all aspects of the presentations – the performance, the presenters (verbal and non-verbal cues) and the listeners. These observations were noted down as they would be crucial to understand and evaluate the overall impact and experience of using the PK format.

The writing assignment for the intermediate English course was writing a report on any issue students face at their regional centre. Consequently, during a face-to-face meeting with her students, the instructor explained the rationale of the study and introduced the PK format to them. She modelled a PK presentation. Other pedagogical support methods included a video on how to make a PK presentation and an example of a student PK presentation. Besides relevant URL links to PK, websites were also provided. It was emphasized that the focus of the task was to develop their oral presentation skills. They were given three weeks to prepare for their presentation.

Since PK was a very new presentation style for the students, some modifications were made to suit the task and the students. For instance, instead of allotting 20 seconds each for every slide, students were allowed to vary the time allocated per slide as long as the total presentation length was 6 minutes and 40 seconds. In this way, it did not differ much from the styles they were accustomed to in which a time limit was set. Besides, time flexibility for each slide meant students could spend more time to focus on important points. Group members were required to allocate the number of slides and presentation time among themselves to ensure all of them presented in a total of 6 minutes 40 seconds. Another modification was that rather than automatically advancing the slides, students were given the option to use a remote for that purpose. This could provide them with a sense of control over their presentation. In a PK presentation, it is vital for students to use visuals rather than text to ensure their

presentations is engaging and concise. In the study, it was stipulated that there could only be a maximum of 12 words on each slide. This was done to deter students from reading from text-heavy slides. They were, however, allowed to have brief notes to help them along in their task. After each group presentation, the floor was opened for discussion. Students of other groups could either pose questions or give constructive comments on the topic.

3.4. Results from the interview data

3.4.1. Development of oral presentation skills

Based on students' interview data, the impact of PK format on presentation skills is positive. Several themes emerged. The most common theme that appeared is that the PK format was effective in improving their presentation skills. As pointed out by students S7 and S12, the fast-paced presentation environment together with myriad visuals helped improve their oral presentation skills.

S7: This Pecha Kucha (format) is new to me. It is very good because we learn to speak. Most of the time, when we use PowerPoint, we read from the slides. So boring. Now, we must speak because the slides only show pictures.

S12: I think all the presentations were interesting because we use pictures. So everyone wants to see the pictures. They (other students) have to listen because they don't know about the pictures. Also we have to use own words. So we try to think of words to use.

Furthermore, as attested by students S9, S27 and S11, the PK format also made them deal with the topic better.

S9: I now know how to tackle the question (topic) because I am forced to choose the main points. So we know what is important.

S27: We must only take the main points...when we do that, we understand the topic better.

S11: By focussing on the main points, I think I am clear about how to approach the topic.

Besides this, it helped them to think critically, as observed by students S3, S4 and S18.

S3: It's not easy to choose the points. We must choose carefully because got time limit. Must think hard.

S4: Doing this Pecha Kucha...I find myself thinking very hard...choosing the points, how to present, what pictures to use etc. It helps me to think better.

S18: Also must know why we choose this point and not another point. Must have strong reason. Help us to think.

Another emerging theme in using the PK format for group presentations was teamwork. Students had to decide on the main points and how they were to be presented. It

warranted collaboration, which prompted all group members to discuss their topic constructively, as noted by students S2 and S10.

S2: We have to discuss together. It's difficult...because to get the main points is not easy if we do individually. So we discuss the points and decide on the presentation.

S10: Teamwork is important. If not, surely cannot. How to prepare in 3 weeks? Too much. What our group did...we all gave ideas how to tackle the topic. Then we decided who will present which section.

Moreover, weaker students such as S13, S21 and S25 were assisted by the more proficient group members in the preparation of the presentation. It helped them build their vocabulary, make correct grammatical structures as well as in express their views coherently.

S13: I am not good in English. If others in my group did not help me, I surely cannot present. They helped me in my presentation...my presentation was the shortest.

S21: Other group members were helpful. I learn new words, how to make sentences, how to pronounce. Good practice. I am not so afraid to present.

S25: I like it because I can practise my English with my friends who are good in English. I learn grammar, vocabulary and others. To me, learning like this is fun.

Collaborative learning led to a boost in confidence too. Many students such as S6, S14 and S30 were motivated when using the PK style.

S6: I am not so good in English. I am very scared to present on my own. Luckily, we are in a group. Can discuss and my friends help me. I was more confident to present.

S14: For me, this Pecha Kucha is good...increase my confidence. It is because we practise together, help one another in English. I like that.

S30: I think so far in my studies, this is my best presentation! Not that I was so good but I learnt a lot about presentation...especially how to present without reading. It makes me confident. I would like to try it (Pecha Kucha) in my office.

An unexpected yet interesting theme that appeared was the anticipated use of PK at their work place. S1 and S15 voiced their eagerness to try the PK format at their workplace.

S1: I work at XYZ where we are involved in projects. We have project presentations very frequently. May be I will propose to use this format so that the presentations are fast and interesting.

S15: In my office, I see my bosses especially from Germany, they present like this. They talk more than read. I like that because everyone listens and not read from the slides. I'm sure if I try to present using this format at my workplace, my bosses will approve. In fact, I think I will suggest it to my project manager.

3.4.2. Challenges

Besides the impact of PK on student presentations, the interview data also exposed several challenges students faced while trying to use the PK format effectively. One critical challenge

was the lack of mastery of the English language. As many of the students' language proficiency was either low or intermediate, it was a formidable task for them to present with hardly any text. They had to practise a lot and some even memorised their presentation. It was stressful for them. This was noted by many students such as S13, S22 and S23.

S13: My English is poor. So no text means I cannot talk. I tried with the help of friends...if not, I don't think I could have presented. Good students...no problem with this kind of presentation.

S22: I agree this (Pecha Kucha) is helpful but I was really stressed. I'm weak in English, so I found it really difficult to present without text. I had to practise many times...even then I could not present well...like just now. I think must have text on slides but may be limit it to 10 sentences or something like that.

S23: I'm very weak in English. For me, I wrote down the sentences I needed to say and memorized them. Only in this way, I could present. If don't have the vocabulary, really difficult...

A problem related to low levels of proficiency was the time constraint. Due to their weakness in the language, students found that they needed more time to prepare and practise. In addition, slide preparation was demanding as they were compelled to select visuals relevant to their topic. This was also time-consuming as related by students S5, S19 and S30.

S5: Three weeks to prepare is not enough...so many things to prepare, the main points, slides, presentation. Also rehearsals. I am weak so I needed more time.

S19: Time is too little...really difficult to do everything in three weeks. If want to have good presentations, then we must be given more time, especially in choosing the pictures.

S30: When there is no text, it means we must memorise...for students like me, who are poor in English. We need the help of others to help us with our presentation. Surely need to practise more, so definitely more time is needed. Also not easy to find the pictures. I think our group could have done better if we had more time to prepare the slides.

3.5. Results of instructor's observations

Similar to student responses, the instructor observed that the use of the PK format for group presentations was a success. Students complied with the PK rules – the time limit, the number of slides, the number of words on each slide and the use of visuals. Those who exceeded the time limit were stopped from continuing their presentation, thus ensuring shorter presentations. As for the number of slides and words on each slide, none exceeded the quota that was set. This reveals that if students are determined and compelled to conform to the regulations, they are able to present without text-heavy slides. However, many depended on hand-held notes. It is probably because they are less proficient in the language or they are so used to reading from texts. Thus, the PK format can help students to wean from reading

during presentations. The use of visuals, on the other hand, was impressive. Some used pictures, photographs, pictorial charts and even caricatures to make their presentations interesting and meaningful. They needed to critically think and select the best visuals that would represent the key points. Furthermore, all the students used the remote instead of the timing feature in *PowerPoint* as the presentation time for each slide was insignificant. It was the duration of the whole presentation that was important, and not the duration for each slide. This is in tandem with Oliver and Kowalczyk's (2013) finding that modification of the original PK format kept the fast-paced presentation environment without forcing students to structure the presentations at 20 seconds per slide.

Overall, the presentations were interesting. The short presentations and use of a variety of visuals captivated the attention of other students. This was further reinforced by students' determination to present to the best of their ability. Although they were generally hindered by the lack of command of the target language, they tried hard to express their views on the issue discussed using the PK format. It was truly commendable because they could not depend on text-heavy slides. They could not even read from the notes as they were constrained by time. The fact that they spoke and not read led others to listen to them. The slides were not only interesting but also rich in content. Due to the limitations of time and number of slides, students were compelled to select the main content to be discussed. Many managed to do that. Those who attempted to include less important points found themselves exceeding the time limit.

It must be noted that having group presentations was good as it was clear that students had discussed the points and practised together. While presenting, group members were seen prompting each other to recall points and use the correct words. It motivated them to present to the best of their ability.

The other students seemed to enjoy the presentations as they were seen listening to their friends intently and reacting to the visuals (praising and laughing). The discussion with other students after the presentation seemed productive. As only the gist was presented, others queried more about the issue. In doing so, they provided new ideas and perspectives in dealing with the topic. The presenters, on the other hand, not only had to be equipped with the relevant knowledge of the issue but also answer spontaneously without text-based aids. This, too, prompted them to speak rather than read.

4. Discussion and implications for the future

Both cognitive and social development dimensions are central in the social constructivist learning approach. In answering the first research question, it was found that the impact of using the PK format led to the development of both aspects. On the cognitive front, the PK style helped improve students' presentation performance. It is probably because it compelled them to focus on key points by mainly using visuals. Furthermore, they had to practise hard prior to the real presentation due to the format structure; that is, fixed time duration and the number of words permitted on each slide. These led to an improvement in their oral presentation ability. The findings are congruent with those of Levin and Peterson (2013), who revealed that the format provides students with an opportunity to learn how to construct a balanced and well-paced presentation. It is an exercise that demands students to identify the main points that would form the fulcrum of their presentations. Likewise, it is similar to the findings reported by Oliver and Kowalczyk (2013). In their study, the students had to think more critically about the information they were presenting in the given time-frame.

Moreover, the presentations were lively and interesting. It could be due to the fact that while adopting this format visuals and fast-paced presentations captivated students' attention. A similar finding was reported by Johnson (2012), who had conducted numerous workshops on PK presentations in universities and youth programmes. He found that not only do such presentations help students get to the point and improve their oral presentations but they also make the audience more involved. Beyer et al. (2012) concluded that limited text is more appealing for the audience, thus making the presentations rich in content and highly entertaining. They also pointed out that by using the PK format, instructors can allocate shorter duration for oral presentations, as demonstrated in this study.

From the social point of view, the findings depicted that teamwork contributed to not only better oral presentations and extemporaneous language learning but also boosted learners' confidence in presenting using the PK format. This finding is in line with that of Oliver and Kowalczyk (2013), who claimed that by working hard together their students produced high quality PK-style presentations. In a similar vein, Tomsett and Shaw (2014) conveyed their students' preference for team work when using PK. Furthermore, as described by Yang (2012), the dimensions involved in group learning (behavioural, emotional and cognitive) which contribute to language learning were apparent in this study. It can, thus, be inferred that group support was crucial for student performance.

An insightful finding was the prospective use of the PK format at work. As students involved in the study are working adults, they could envisage PK's potential at their work

place. The fact that incorporating PK in the English course would assist them in their career portrays PK's significance in situated learning which occurs in a social environment that takes into account real-world practices and settings making learning more relevant, useful, and transferable (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Strong communication skills like those brought about by the PK-style presentations would augur well for distant learners in their careers.

As for the second research question, the findings revealed several challenges that students faced while using the PK format, namely low English proficiency level and time constraint. As a second language in Malaysia, English is not commonly used; hence students are generally less proficient in the language. Being forced to use the language without much text is a formidable task for them. The problem of lack of time is probably due to the rigour of a PK-style presentation that demands a great deal of preparation in terms of not only selection of points and visuals but also presenting in a limited time frame. In fact, it warrants time investment at all stages – planning, preparation, and implementation (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Findings related to lack of time were also reported by Anderson and Williams (2012). In their study, the students using the PK format complained of time constraint influencing selecting information and explaining details. The researchers view their grouse as an initial response that would dissipate with more practice in using the format.

In addition, the advantage of the PK format is that it can be adapted to different settings. For instance, the instructor adapted the format to suit the needs of the course and her students by enabling group presentations without rigidly-timed slide advancement. That the PK format can be modified to suit different settings is vital for language instructors as it allows them to design PK-style oral presentations for students of differing proficiency levels in different courses. It is crucial for instructors to carefully design a suitable PK-style presentation task and prepare learners for it appropriately.

It is imperative to note that the findings of the study are limited by the small number of participants, making generalizations impossible. A larger number of students using the PK format would provide a clearer and more representative view of its effectiveness among distant learners. Moreover, a three-week preparation time is short for a presentation format that students have not seen or used before. A longer preparation time could have produced different results. In addition, the scope of the study is limited to the development of presentation skills, and not speaking skills as well. It would be more fitting in L2 research if both skills are examined.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, invaluable insights could be drawn from the use of the PK format in *PowerPoint* presentations. It can help students develop their communication skills, specifically their oral presentation skills. The use of slides with more visuals and limited text together with a short time frame for presentation forces students to present relevant points without reading and within the time allocated. Such communication skills are, indeed, highly valued at the work place. Moreover, PK's flexibility allows language instructors to adopt and adapt it to suit different needs and settings. The fact that the format could be used for different types of students, proficiency levels, modes of learning and tasks is a prized asset that instructors should consider for their courses.

Due to the immense potential of the PK format, further research should be conducted. Research on the use of this format for varied classroom sizes and students of mixed proficiency levels, among others, could enhance its use further. Besides, PK's impact on presentation skills and its effect on speaking skills should also be examined. It is also vital to experiment with it further in Malaysian institutions as the invaluable insights derived would shed light on its potential to be used more extensively among tertiary students.

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