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DEMYSTIFYING CRITICAL REFLECTION

Improving Pedagogy and Practice
with Legitimation Code Theory

Legitimation Code Theory



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CONSOLIDATING PERFORMANCE

Reflection in the service of developing presentation skills

Jodie L. Martin

Introduction

Presentations are often assigned in university classes as assessments without explicit instruction on how to present or how they are assessed; the same is true of reflective writing assessments. Students without particular skills or knowledge risk being marked down for not conforming to a tacit standard. International students from differing high school cultures, and both domestic and international multilingual students, can be particularly disadvantaged by unspoken expectations for performance and writing. It can be challenging to ensure all students develop academic presentation skills no matter their topic, talent, or experience. This chapter examines how short reflective self-assessment pieces were introduced in an Academic English program for first-year international science students at a Canadian university to encourage students to connect their preparation and participation to their performance, and to shape their behaviour for subsequent presentations.

The reflective self-assessment pieces were introduced during a semester-long (13-week) focus on presentations in which students presented a research article of their choice in three formats: pecha kucha (an automatically-timed slideshow using only images to accompany speech, PechaKucha 2021), poster, and slideshow presentation. The three formats allowed iterative and cumulative instruction on images and image-language relationships (Roehrich 2016), semiotics of static and dynamic layout, the grammar of writing with bullet points, and the use of the body to engage the audience. The pedagogical design implemented a Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) (Rothery 1994) to dedicate weeks for modelling and deconstructing the format, preparing the presentation in class, and practicing with colleagues before finally performing for assessment; despite this, students seemed un- or under-prepared, and risked approaching the

presentations separately rather than cumulatively. A reflection activity was therefore introduced to draw attention to valued actions and behaviours. In order to do so responsibly, low stakes, short-answer questions were posed with self-assessment for participation marks. This chapter explores why and how these reflective self-assessments were introduced, and how, through analysis of both particular questions posed and student responses, they served to consolidate aspects of performance that were focused on in the instruction.

This chapter begins by positioning this study within studies of reflection, as a meta-reflection by the instructor. It then describes the context of the pedagogy and the processes of data collection and selection which provided the corpus for this study. The Specialization dimension of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) is presented with a particular focus on the *4-K model* (Maton 2014). A *translation device* (Maton & Chen 2016) for enacting the 4-K model in presentations is proposed and illustrated. A 4-K analysis then explores why and how the reflective self-assessments were introduced and how the students responded to two questions in particular. This study therefore provides an example of the low-stakes use of reflective writing to consolidate performance knowledge when success can be achieved in multiple ways and students have a wide range of experiences and expertise to draw on.

From reflection to presentations

This chapter takes reflection to mean the process by which actors – typically students or practitioners – review their past experiences with a measure of interpretation, whether through disciplinary concepts or professional principles; similarly, reflective writing describes a wide variety of text types which essentially centre on personal experience, again with some measure of interpretation. Such writing is frequently used in education associated with professions, such as teaching (Beauchamp 2015; Macnaught 2021), nursing (Brooke 2019), or business and social work (Szenes & Tilakaratna 2021), yet has been criticized for issues including the vagueness behind the ‘critical thinking practices’ purported to underpin such writing (Szenes et al. 2015), issues around the ethics of assessing such writing (Beauchamp 2015; Szenes & Tilakaratna, this volume) and lack of clarity about the position of emotion, identity and context (Beauchamp 2015; Tilakaratna & Szenes 2020) as well as the role of pedagogy (Ryan & Ryan 2013).

Consequently, multiple studies focused on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or academic discourse in general have revealed both the complexity and the underlying values that may be tacit in reflective writing (Szenes et al. 2015; Brooke 2019; Macnaught 2021; Szenes & Tilakaratna 2021). Such work has been successfully applied to reveal the forms and grammar of reflective writing to students (Ryan 2011; Ryan & Ryan 2013; Kirk 2017; Brooke et al. 2019; Macnaught 2021; Meidell Sigsgaard & Jacobsen 2021). This chapter therefore responds to such work by endeavouring to take

responsibility for the assessment practices enacted while being responsive to students and contexts. It reveals a new context of reflective writing practices by focusing on an undergraduate general science program, where students are developing academic language and language practices. It also focuses on reflective writing introduced to support a type of performance: academic presentations. The reflective self-assessments were designed to emphasize presentation practices and processes. Following Grossman's (2009) categorization, the reflective writing assessed in this course were mostly descriptive accounts of students' preparation and participation before and during their presentations.

Presentations in this chapter are taken to mean polished performances in which a speech is accompanied by a presentation product such as a slideshow or poster. They are therefore highly complex multimodal artefacts. An academic slideshow presentation includes a slideshow using appropriate software, which itself involves images, layout, sequencing, and language, and a speech by the presenter, who interacts with the audience. For in-person presentations, speakers typically stand in front of an audience, and interact both with the audience and with the slideshow through eye contact, gesture and body language (Hood 2020). Online presentations may be pre-recorded or live, the presenter may be visible in a video or simply heard through a voice-over, and they may interact with the slides using a mouse. These possibilities and constraints – both contextual and technological – are continually shaping and being shaped by the presentation and the presenter.

In order to discuss this topic, it is necessary to delineate the terms used: for the digital or physical object which accompanies the speaker, the format will generally be used as the label, such as slideshow or poster, or presentation product where a general term is required. The term presentation will thus be used to encompass the complete process of presenting, including the words and actions of the presenter, and the content and design of the presentation product, and those activities required before and during the presentation event for success. Similarly, reflection is used to refer to the processes of reflecting on students' experiences, while reflective self-assessments labels the specific tasks which are examined in this chapter.

Context of pedagogy

This study comes from an EAP course for first-year international Science students at a Canadian University. A focus on presentations was introduced in the second term of the two-term course in order to prepare students to present in their concomitant courses as well as in a subsequent student research conference. The preceding year, students had reported a wide range of previous presentation experiences and skills, with some having never presented with slideshow software while others had extensive experience with multiple formats in the Canadian high school system. Students had also struggled with the conventions of academic research presentations in the

previous year's conference, with many closely replicating their written reports in their slides and speech. While language support had been provided through workshops, an extended focus over a semester in this course would provide the opportunity to engage at length with multiple facets of presentations as well as have students present multiple times to better consolidate their knowledge and skills. The course, including teaching materials, assessment design, and assignments completed by students, therefore forms the focus for this study.

Data collection and selection

The textual corpus for this study is formed from the responses of 42 students to four separate activities over the 13-week term focused on presentations, although no single activity was completed by all students. The four activities included elements of survey and critical reflection in short responses:

1. Initial presentation skills survey (homework in week 1)
2. Pecha kucha reflective self-assessment (week 5)
3. Poster reflective self-assessment (week 9)
4. Final reflective self-assessment (week 13)

The first activity was an unmarked homework survey, asking students to rate with a 5-point descriptive scale their knowledge and familiarity with presentation formats, and their own presentation skills, as well as describe characteristics of successful or weak presentations, and their own strengths and weaknesses in presentation. The remaining three activities followed each presentation assessment and contributed towards the students' participation grade for the term, worth 5% of their overall grade. The second and third tasks used an identical structure, with two questions asking students to grade how well they prepared for the presentation, how well they supported their colleagues, and to justify those grades with 100-word responses, while a third question asked for advice on how to deliver that particular presentation format. In week 11, classes shifted online as part of the COVID-19 global lockdown. Therefore, the final reflective self-assessment was simplified due to the disruption to preparation and practices. It asked students for advice they would give someone delivering an academic slideshow presentation for the first time, with emphasis on the differences between online and in-person presentations. It also directed students to review their initial survey responses and reflect on what they had learnt the most about since the start of the semester. They re-rated their familiarity with each of the presentation genres, identified which format they would present if given the choice, and explained why. For this task, full marks were awarded for completion. If students did not complete any task, they received zero for that activity. The dataset therefore consisted of 15 numerical responses, and 14 short-answer responses of up

to 100 words each, for up to 42 students. The dataset was collated after the end of term, after consent from students was obtained.

A pilot study of ten students' responses to all four tasks was initially conducted to develop and test the analytical methodology described below. The numerical responses to the initial survey were then used to select a sub-corpus for this study. Students' self-ratings from the initial survey on their familiarity with presentation formats and their confidence with presentations were averaged and sorted. The six lowest and highest responses to the two questions were identified and used to compile two sets of students with significant overlap between questions, in order to investigate students with a range of previous experience and perceived talent. Nine students were therefore grouped as 'low confidence students', some of whom had not completed or partially completed all tasks, while seven were 'high confidence students', for a total of 16. The four tasks for the 16 students were then coded and analyzed, and their responses to the second and third activities selected for discussion.

For any examples given, a three-factor code is used, with 1 or 2 for the low or high confidence students respectively, a unique letter to identify each student within each group, plus a number to indicate the task the response comes from (1–4). For example, a high confidence student's response to the final reflective self-assessment is coded as [2C4]. Examples have been lightly edited to correct typographic or punctuation errors which may lead to misinterpretation but are otherwise as students submitted.

Methodological framework: From Specialization to translation

Specialization and the 4-K model

The LCT dimension of Specialization (Maton 2014) is useful for this study as it explores the different ways artefacts, practices and people may be specialized as legitimate and successful. This enables the discussion of aspects of presentation ranging from the presentation product itself to the presenters' behaviours, attitudes and practices. Specialization identifies *epistemic relations* (ER) between knowledge practices and their objects of study, and *social relations* (SR) between knowledge practices and their subjects. Each of these relations can be independently emphasized (+) or downplayed (–) as the basis of legitimacy. These strengths are represented as continua of strengths to create the specialization plane, shown in Figure 6.1, which generates four principal *specialization codes*, each with stronger and/or weaker relations.

Specialization codes are particularly useful to analyze situations when there are clashes between actors or changes over time in whether a practice is legitimated by, to put it simply, knowledge or knowers or both or neither. For presentations, we can consider the object of study to be the content and presentation product itself (the slideshow or poster), while the subject of study is the student presenter. Thus, presentations involve both 'knowledgey' and

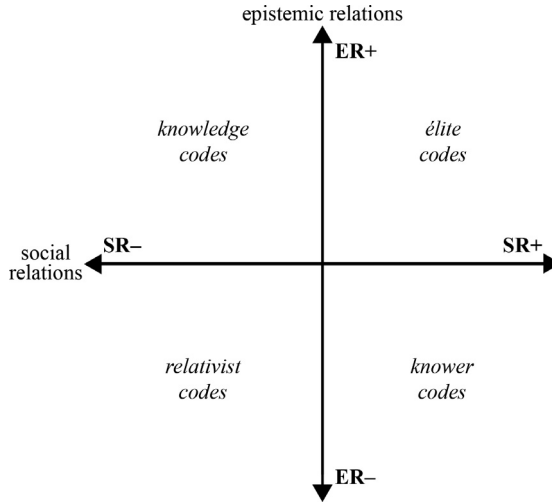


FIGURE 6.1 The specialization plane
Source: Maton (2014: 30)

‘knowery’ features, which can be emphasized separately or together at different times while still producing what may be judged as a successful presentation. This chapter, however, will go deeper by using the 4-K model to tease apart exactly what aspects of presentation knowledge and/or which characteristics of presenters were important.

As described in Table 6.1, the 4-K model subdivides epistemic relations into *ontic relations* and *discursive relations*, subdivides social relations into *subjective relations* and *interactional relations*. The title of the model reflects what each relation is to: ontic relations (OR) are to what is or may be *known*; discursive relations (DR) are to other knowledges; subjective relations (SR) are to characteristics of *knowers*; and interactional relations (IR) are to ways of *knowing*. Each may be more or less emphasized as the basis of legitimacy. So, when epistemic relations are stronger, either or both ontic relations and discursive relations are stronger, but if epistemic relations are weaker, both these sub-relations are weaker. Similarly, when social relations are stronger, either or

TABLE 6.1 The 4-K model

		<i>Relations to:</i>
epistemic relations (ER)	ontic relations (OR)	Known
	discursive relations (DR)	Knowledges
social relations (SR)	subjective relations (SubR)	Knowers
	interactional relations (IR)	Knowing

Source: Maton (2014)

both subjective relations and interactional relations are stronger, and social relations are weaker, both sub-relations are weaker. These concepts allow us to delve deeper into what an emphasis on specialized knowledge or special knowers as the basis of legitimacy might mean.

The *epistemic plane* of Figure 6.2 involves ontic relations (OR) and discursive relations (DR) whose strengths generate four *insights*. *Situational insights* (OR+, DR-) emphasize what is known, such as what is a legitimate object of study to talk about in a presentation, while downplaying knowledges, such as ways to construct a presentation. *Doctrinal insights* (OR-, DR+) downplay what is known, such as being open to any topic for presentation, but emphasize how it should be discussed. *Purist insight* (OR+, DR+) emphasize both the known and knowledges. *Knower/no insights* (OR-, DR-) downplay both the known and knowledges – if social relations (which are not on this plane) are relatively strong, it is ‘knower’ and if they are relatively weak it is ‘no’. *No insights*, associated with open situations where anything may be acceptable and legitimate, do not appear in this study.

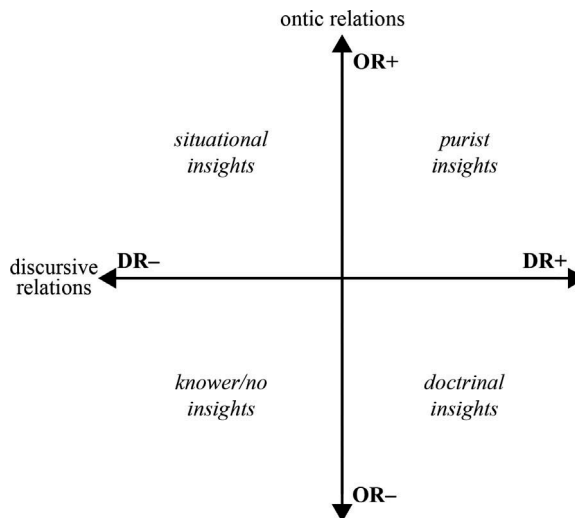


FIGURE 6.2 The epistemic plane
Source: Maton (2014: 99)

The *social plane* of Figure 6.3 involves subjective relations (SubR) and interactional relations (IR) whose strengths generate four *gazes*. *Social gazes* (SubR+, IR-) emphasize categories of knowers, such as characteristics of presenters, while downplaying ways of knowing, such as presentation behaviours. *Cultivated gazes* (SubR-, IR+) invert these emphases. *Born gazes* (SubR+, IR+) emphasizes both characteristics of knowers and experiences of knowing. *Trained/blank gazes* (SubR-, IR-) downplays social relations in all forms (and which gaze depends on the strengths of epistemic relations: stronger gives a *trained gaze* and weaker gives a *blank gaze*).

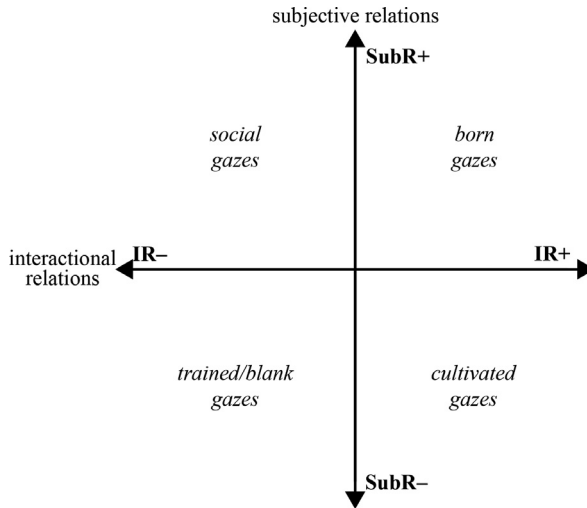


FIGURE 6.3 The social plane
Source: Maton (2014: 186)

In investigating both insights and gazes in presentations, it is important to make clear that this is not suggesting that presentations are fundamentally *élite code* (ER+, SR+; see Figure 6.1). Rather it is suggesting that presentations always involve both a presentation as object and presenter as subject and therefore it is useful to consider these aspects together. However, these concepts are very abstract, so to investigate both my teaching and my students' responses empirically, a *translation device* is required.

A translation device for 4-K model in presentations

A translation device is a way of relating concepts to a dataset by identifying signs of manifestation in that dataset (Maton & Chen 2016). I drew on both my own goals and materials for teaching and the students' survey responses and reflective self-assessments to identify common themes and, through processes of soft-focus and hard-focus analysis involving immersion in the data and iterative movements between concepts and data (Maton & Chen 2016: 42–43), create and refine the translation device. The translation device for the 4-K model in presentations is summarized in Table 6.2. The four sets of relations will be described separately under the higher-level concepts of epistemic relations (presentation knowledge) and social relations (presenters' characteristics and experiences) along with examples from all four reflective activities, where each set of relations is clearly emphasized. Insights and gazes will be described as relevant in the following discussion.

TABLE 6.2 Translation device for 4–K model in presentations

Specialization		4–K	Translation	Manifestations
epistemic relations (ER)	ontic relations (OR)	known	content or context	topic, information, science knowledge, specific pictures or language
	discursive relations (DR)	knowledges	technical skills or preparation	design, voice modulation, technical know-how, procedures and (solo) practice
social relations (SR)	subjective relations (SubR)	knowers	talent or confidence	emotion, nervousness, confidence, non-native-speaker status
	interactional relations (IR)	knowing	interaction or practice	audience interaction and engagement, eye contact, practice with peers or instructors, feedback

Presentation knowledge

Epistemic relations in a presentation relate to an emphasis on what is being presented and how it is prepared. Ontic relations have been translated as referring to content or context, especially when they are controlled or controlling. In Example 1, the student's advice on how to give a pecha kucha presentation began with an emphasis on the content, both in terms of the topic and the pictures themselves, while Example 2 explained a preference for a slideshow presentation in contrast to the pecha kucha due to the formats' features:

Example 1

[1E2] I think there are some suggestions for a pecha kucha. First, I think it'd be better not to choose a topic with abstract things. Because it is really difficult to prepare pictures for the slides.

Example 2

[1A4] PPT presentation is more flexible than the pecha kucha presentation since we can control the time for each slide.

The student responses strengthen ontic relations through emphases on the topic of the presentation itself, specific information or science knowledge, as well as specific pictures or language related to the topic or format. The strict format of the pecha kucha – strict automatic timing, with only pictures on slides – resulted in several responses reacting to the constraints of the format and consequently emphasizing the importance of the topic.

Discursive relations have been translated as an emphasis on technical skills or preparation. In Example 3, a student at the end of semester evaluated his

skill development by alluding to procedural knowledge in the ‘proper way’ to prepare as well as to pedagogical activities.

Example 3

[2G4] I think ‘Talking on a topic I know but without a script’, ‘Writing text for a poster’ are the skills that I improved effectively. I have mostly learnt about the proper way to get any text ready for a poster presentation and creating links to give an effective speech without a script. All the activities helped me to inculcate the ideas which helped me to perform well in the assignments.

The student responses which related to presentation design, public speaking, and solo practice with repetition rather than interaction with an audience strengthened discursive relations.

Presenters’ characteristics and experiences

Social relations were also present in the corpus as an emphasis on the presenter and practices involved in the presentation. Subjective relations have been translated as relating to talent or confidence. Stronger subjective relations in student responses often involved references to confidence or nervousness, demonstrated respectively in Example 4 by a high confidence student assessing his own skills, and in Example 5, where a low confidence student suggests the reasons a presenter might be less successful.

Example 4

[2G1] I think my strongest skill in presenting is being confident. I don’t have a fear of people whether it’s 10 or 1,000 in number. I think this skill is inherited from my mother because she is a very good orator and my idol as well.

Example 5

[1E1] I think sometimes the speaker might be nervous so that they couldn’t do well, like forgetting words, speaking unclearly.

Social relations manifested as references to emotion, and to characteristics of the presenters represented as stable and essential, such as their self-described non-native speaker status, which were more significantly present in the initial reflections at the start of the semester, before the course emphases were clear. By contrast, subjective relations were rarely emphasized in the end of semester responses, with a few exceptions where the students emphasized their own

inexperience and subsequent increase in confidence. Although not a major emphasis in this study, it is useful to identify subjective relations because it can raise awareness of negative self-talk which harms students' ability to achieve, as well as highlight positive emotions that result from learning (see Tilakaratna & Szenes 2020).

Interactional relations are translated as relating to interaction or practice, where interaction can be with an audience during a presentation, with peers during practice or with a significant other such as an instructor. Example 6 focuses on audience engagement when describing common mistakes presenters make, Example 7 shows an example of apprenticeship-style interactions, while Example 8 describes the student's preference for in-person presentations.

Example 6

[2C1] I notice that sometimes presenters do not care about how audiences feel and what they think. Presenters just do their jobs and read their scripts. And they may read really quick and they do not pay attention to whether audiences understand or not. I think sometimes they need to speak slower and clearer.

Example 7

[1B3] In addition, I go to the office hour twice to talk with Jodie and check my poster. The images that I choose are all relate to the paragraph and I choose several images and picked the best four. For the hook,¹ after talking with Jodie, I tried to find the most interesting points for my poster. I did lots of work, so I want to give myself 5 out of 5.

Example 8

[2A4] I kind of like doing a PowerPoint presentation in-person. When actually facing someone, you are making interactions. You are giving and receiving eye contact, body language, which makes you feel like you and your audience are all engaged in the presentation. It feels more comfortable than talking to no one.

The practices associated with stronger interactional relations were particularly highlighted when students switched from face-to-face to online presentations as a consequence of the sudden shift online due to COVID-19 in 2020, and often their preference for a format referred to audience presence or absence, revealing the importance of interactional relations.

These examples have demonstrated how the 4-K model manifests in this dataset, revealing nuances in values and priorities, which shifted somewhat between the beginning and end of the semester, and with the introduction of

emergency remote education. The next sections will apply these concepts to reveal the main emphases of reflective self-assessment in this study, in instructional and assessment design, and in student responses.

Reflecting on reflective self-assessments

Why I introduced reflective self-assessments

As the instructor, I chose to introduce reflection activities at a point of need, and it is worth exploring why I did that and how I endeavoured to do so responsibly. I was concerned students were not recognizing or valuing the practices and processes I was teaching as vital for presentation success. The semester involved reiterative assignments: the students presented one research article in three presentation formats. Students were free to choose any article related to science that interested them, therefore ontic relations were not emphasized. This was important as students in a general science program studied a range of courses, all of which the Academic English course supported. Instead, I focused on the practices associated with preparing a good presentation product: the design elements such as image selection and placement, semiotic elements such as the logical relationships between images and language (Roehrich 2016), and linguistic elements such as the grammar of bullet point form in slides. That is, I emphasized technical skills and practices, or discursive relations. As such, my teaching presented a doctrinal insight (OR-, DR+), where they learned skills and practices that could apply to any topic and across the three formats.

Subjective relations were also relevant to my teaching. The decision to focus a whole semester on presentations was underpinned by an endeavour to *cultivate* students into presentation skills by giving them extended experience; that is, I actively tried to weaken subjective relations by emphasizing that talent and confidence were less important than practices that would help everyone present well. I emphasized interaction by encouraging audience awareness and engagement through eye contact, posture, and voice, and by having students help their classmates in practice sessions. Overall, I was implementing a *cultivated gaze* (SubR-, IR+) to endeavour to help both high and low confidence students to present well.

The reflective tasks which bookended the term were always planned, but after the first presentation I decided to introduce and designed the reflective self-assessments. Despite an explicit schedule with a week for teaching the presentation format and relevant semiotic and linguistic features, and a week for working on the presentation in class, students arrived at the third week unprepared or underprepared to practice their presentation with their classmates.

I designed the assessments to be cumulative and was concerned students would approach the presentations separately and fail to transfer what they learnt to the next presentation. I was also concerned they did not recognize the procedures of design and the processes of practice and participation as part

of the presentation process. I wanted to ensure that students became aware of what they could do to be successful in subsequent presentations, within and beyond the course. I therefore introduced the reflective self-assessments to draw attention to specific behaviours, but endeavoured to do so responsibly.

How I designed reflective self-assessments

I was actively concerned at the time that students had had limited experience and instruction in reflective writing and that in evaluating that writing, I may unintentionally overvalue writing which happened to match my cultural expectations (see Tilakaratna & Szenes, this volume), or which gratified my ego as a teacher. Nevertheless, I wanted to encourage students to reflect on their experiences and build on them in subsequent assignments. I mitigated my concerns about writing by using short answer (100-word) questions. I mitigated my concerns about assessment by asking students to evaluate their own behaviour and justify it with the writing. Spinelli (2019) highlights self-assessment and self-evaluation as a strategy to encourage self-awareness through reflection. In marking the students' first reflective self-assessment, I validated their grade and only made adjustments of half a mark in a couple of cases which will be discussed below. The marks were also allocated to their participation grade; 27 marks were allocated across the three reflective self-assessments, worth 5% of their overall mark. Therefore, the difference in assessing themselves with a mark or two higher or lower would not have a significant impact on their overall mark, while still prompting them to consider their practices and justify them in their written responses. Ultimately, I was less interested in the validity of the marks they allocated themselves as in their ability to identify factors in their own success.

An analysis of my assessment design reveals a match with my instructional design. I focus here on the two main questions in the pecha kucha and poster reflective self-assessments. The first self-assessment question asked students to give themselves a grade based on how well they prepared for each presentation and detailed the activities they had been expected to perform in class:

Pecha kucha reflection question 1:

Give yourself a grade out of 5 for how well you prepared for the pecha kucha. This includes making the most of time in class to find the article, read it, find images, assemble your presentation in PowerPoint, and write your script. A grade of 5 indicates that you maximized your work in class.

Explain IN AT LEAST 100 WORDS why you have given yourself this mark.

Poster reflection question 1:

Give yourself a grade out of 5 for how well you prepared for the poster presentation. This includes making the most of time in class to adapt your text for the poster, design the poster, format the text, images and data representations for the poster, and prepare what you would say as your hook and to discuss your poster. A grade of 5 indicates that you maximized your work in class.

Explain IN AT LEAST 100 WORDS why you have given yourself this mark.

Both questions emphasized what counted as successful preparation: that a perfect grade indicated that the student had ‘maximized [their] work in class’. Therefore, it emphasized discursive relations by asking students to evaluate how they had followed the procedures of preparation. It did not ask them to evaluate the presentation product itself, such as the quality of the images for the pecha kucha or the design of the poster; therefore it did not emphasize ontic relations, implying a doctrinal insight (OR-, DR+).

The second self-assessment question asked students to give themselves a grade based on how well they participated with their colleagues before each presentation and detailed the different ways they were expected to participate in class and with each other:

Pecha kucha reflection question 2:

Give yourself a grade out of 5 for how well you helped your colleagues prepare and practice their pecha kucha presentations. This includes the feedback you gave during the practice classes as well as any other times you helped them inside or outside class. A grade of 5 indicates that you gave detailed feedback, helped them to improve their presentation significantly and gave that feedback almost entirely in English.

Poster reflection question 2:

Give yourself a grade out of 5 for how well you helped colleagues by giving them feedback and assistance with slide design; and how you discussed their posters with them on the presentation day. A grade of 5 indicates that you gave detailed feedback, helped them to improve their presentation significantly and gave that feedback almost entirely in English.

Explain IN AT LEAST 100 WORDS why you have given yourself that mark.

These questions emphasized the types of interaction that would be legitimate and would add to students' achievement, both for their presentations and their language development. It emphasized how I wanted and expected them to behave as students but related the behaviour to other students' achievement, rather than their own. Therefore the question asked for an emphasis on interactional relations. It did not ask them to rate their confidence as the initial reflective survey had; it therefore did not emphasize subjective relations. Overall, these questions suggested a cultivated gaze (SubR-, IR+), complementing the doctrinal insight of the first question and highlighting the values of instruction.

How students responded to reflective self-assessments and what that reveals

On the whole, students' written responses matched the emphasis on discursive relations asked by the first question and the emphasis on interactional relations asked by the second question in both reflective self-assessments. Their responses reveal that these emphases were made not only through recounting the relevant experiences prompted by the questions, but also by drawing on and interpreting other experiences from both inside and outside the classroom. This section presents examples of responses to each question which matched the asked-for emphasis, as well as a response which did not. Together these reveal the diverse practices and experiences which can contribute towards the success of an academic presentation.

The first question asked students to rate their preparation and therefore recount how they prepared. For the most part, students recounted what they did and therefore based their self-assessed score on following those procedures. One clear example comes from a high confidence student who gave a particularly successful and memorable pecha kucha presentation; however, she had had difficulty at first selecting an article in class, delaying her processes. Her reflection in Example 9 ultimately attributes her achievement not to following the in-class procedures, but in practicing by herself at home, another legitimate preparation strategy. Therefore, both her failure and her success established what counted as legitimate for presentations through an emphasis on discursive relations.

Example 9

[2B2] I give myself a 4. I spent too much time in class to find an article so I didn't have much time left in class to find image and practice. I did most of the work at home but I successfully completed and practiced at home so I think. It wasn't a big deal. I sometimes get attracted [distracted] in class too so I actually find myself more efficient doing stuff at home or alone. I think my presentation went well as I spent a lot of time practicing over and over to make sure I don't get stuck in such a limited time.

Most responses emphasized discursive relations and some also emphasized other sets of relations, both epistemic and social. Students could therefore generate a successful presentation and reflect on different values and bases of that achievement in their reflective writing and still be graded successfully (especially as it was self-assessment). There was, however, a key target for the task which can be identified from the few instances where I critiqued a student response as inappropriate and adjusted the grade by half a mark. For example, following the poster presentation, one of the high confidence students provided the response in Example 10 to the first question.

Example 10:

[2D3] I think I can get 4.5 in this section because I think I did a quite good presentation and a nice poster. I like the design of the poster and images. However, the poster has too much words and the size is quite small, and the data from the graph is unclear enough. As for the presentation, in the hook part, I did attract audience and let them to listen my presentation. When I discussed my poster, the flow was good and I can discuss with the audience because the topic I chose related to everyone. The images in the poster might attract audience, but it might distract the main part of the poster.

Unlike other responses to this question for both presentations, including by this student, this response neither focuses on the actions of the student leading up to the presentation, nor legitimizes other foci with an emphasis on discursive relations. Instead, it evaluates the poster itself and the presentation. As such, it emphasizes ontic relations – that is, the content and form of the poster. Even the mention of discussion with the audience, and how the poster attracted the audience, which could emphasize interactional relations, was predicated on the choice of topic as relevant to the audience. I did not give feedback on most of the responses, and mainly ratified the marks they awarded themselves as long as there was some justification and I had not directly observed contradictory behaviour. For this response, however, I gave a brief statement: ‘This was supposed to be a reflection on your preparation not your performance’, and I lowered the mark he had awarded himself from 4.5 to 4; misunderstanding the task did not seem too great a mistake to penalize significantly.

The second question asked students to evaluate their participation with colleagues. One of the high confidence students detailed in Example 11 how he helped students prepare and directly related the use of English to their success.

Example 11

[2C3] Since I didn’t attend the poster practice day, I will not talk about giving feedback about their poster design. I will give myself 4.5 out of 5

on discussions about their posters on the presentation day. This is because I tried hardly to ask questions and go around check their posters in order to make them be well-prepared. And I was speaking English all the time to help my classmates get ready. If I speak other language to them, then this whole process will be meaningless because this can't help them to be prepared. I hope they can do well on this presentation and I would like to give them a helping hand when they need.

In this way, he emphasized interactional relations quite strongly, even though he chose to focus on participation on the day of the assessment, rather than in the preparation and practice weeks. By contrast, a low confidence student in Example 12 did not see the relevance of interaction, although he appreciated the technology which let them edit posters (pod screens displayed the posters from laptops, rather than printing them).

Example 12

[IH3] Actually I think it is not that helpful for us in this part. We had already been so busy and tough understanding our own content of article. The advice we can trade is so limited. But one thing is important that we can give useful advice on the format of the post instead of its content. It is a good way to present the poster on the screen for preview. We can adjust poster arrangement in time and find out which part we need to improve on the format.

In general, I think it is a relatively individual job.

By minimizing the importance of giving feedback to colleagues, this student downplays interactional relations and instead emphasizes discursive relations. Essentially, he adopts a trained gaze (SubR-, IR-), or, in specialization codes, a knowledge code (ER+, SR-) rather than a knower code (ER-, SR+). I deducted half a mark from the student's self-assessment, especially as I had noticed this student's lack of participation in class.

Overall, students responded to the self-assessment prompts by describing specific activities as directed, focusing on preparation and participation. They emphasized discursive relations and interactional relations as the basis for their success, though sometimes they also emphasized other sets of relations, both epistemic and social. The only times students were marked down was when they exclusively emphasized other relations or downplayed the targeted relations. The 4-K analysis of these responses provides insight on why both reflection and performance may require diverse ways of achieving a successful presentation be recognized.

Conclusion

This chapter reflects on a pedagogical intervention introducing reflective writing to consolidate and improve performance of academic presentations. It

offers an example of designing and assessing such writing in a way which aims to be responsive to students' multiple starting points of knowledge, confidence and experience, and multiple pathways to creating a successful presentation event. Using the 4-K model for analysis, it reveals that through both instruction and assessment design I emphasized particular procedures and practices for presentations, and that almost all students matched these emphases with multiple experiences, sometimes supplementing with additional emphases.

This chapter focuses on two questions from two reflective self-assessments, each following an academic presentation performance. They were created as low-stakes, in-class activities, including self-assessment by students to encourage reflection while avoiding teacher bias in assessment. For the first question on preparation, students were prompted to demonstrate stronger discursive relations by identifying principles and procedures involved in the presentation. For the second question on participation, they were prompted to demonstrate stronger interactional relations by identifying practices and interaction with each other or the instructor before or during the presentation event. The few instances where the short answer responses were deemed less appropriate often involved the wrong experiential focus in their responses, suggesting the importance of identifying the relevant experiences in reflective writing and explaining the requirements of the task. A focus on the wrong object, experience, or activity makes it difficult if not impossible to demonstrate that the activity is legitimized by the appropriate actions and behaviours and therefore matching the required emphasis on relations. While the examples included showed clear examples either matching or failing to match an emphasis on discursive relations and interactional relations respectively, this did not mean all other relations were downplayed; students also variously emphasized other sets of relations, both epistemic and social, not only without penalty but sometimes more effectively.

Therefore, specifying relevant experiences to reflect on did not restrain students from drawing on other experiences which demonstrated the same emphases on preparation or participation, and encouraged the vast majority to meet that expectation. Including self-assessment allowed students the opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences, without expecting the performance of a different type of writing that had not been explicitly taught. The assessment practice described in this chapter therefore provides an example of an effort to include reflective writing in a way that consolidates knowledge and facilitates transfer, endeavouring to be responsive to students' needs and diverse abilities, and take responsibility for assessment practices.

Note

- 1 The 'hook' was a one-minute speech to the class before the poster presentations to encourage audience members to come and see their poster and talk to them about it. It was introduced based on experience and suggestion of the graduate teaching assistants.

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