

## TEACHING CREATIVE PRESENTATIONS

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### Abstract

The *Teaching Creative Presentations* workshop was aimed to empower educators and trainers with innovative techniques for training innovative presentation skills. In an era of increasingly visual and engaging communication, the ability to craft and deliver compelling presentations is essential for students and their future professional prospects. The session covered the discussion on the importance of creativity in presentations, followed by hands-on activities that encouraged participants to think outside the box. Through interactive exercises, attendees discovered methods to foster creativity and audience engagement strategies, including storytelling and designing visually appealing slides. We also delved into the role of body language and vocal delivery in capturing and maintaining audience attention. The workshop equipped participants (teachers and lecturers) with a toolkit of strategies and resources to inspire creativity in their teaching practices to train their students in engaging presentations techniques.

**Keywords:** *Presentations, creativity, rhetoric.*

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### 1. Introduction

In an era where effective communication is essential, the ability to deliver engaging and memorable presentations has become an essential skill in academic and professional context. While traditional presentation methods focus on structure and clarity, creative presentations go a step further, integrating storytelling, audience interaction, and innovative visuals to enhance engagement and impact. What exactly makes a presentation creative? This paper explores this question by drawing insights from a survey conducted among educators and students, identifying key characteristics that define creativity in presentations.

In the survey, 51 pre-creativity course students were asked the question ‘*In your opinion, what makes a presentation creative?*’. The problem ‘*How to teach creative presentations?*’ was discussed with 4 teachers experienced in creativity trainings in unstructured phone interviews. In the paper the quotes from respondents’ inputs (key words or phrases) are marked *in italics*.

The paper outlines practical strategies for teaching creative presentations in the classroom. Techniques that help students develop originality, and creative spirit are discussed. The methods include thinking in questions, examples of constraint-based tasks, and taking a different perspective.

It must be noted, though that presenting creatively is a competency that encompasses a variety of skills such as verbal and non-verbal communication, innovative thinking, improvising and interacting with the audience. While the paper discusses the techniques to be used in the classroom, online or during trainings, both communication skills and creativity are recommended to be taught before the creative presentation course or training.

### 2. What are creative presentations?

Creativity is about *thinking*, thinking out of the box, being *original* and *curious*. A creative presentation is *original*, *interesting* and *novel*; it requires a different than usual, *non-standard*, *out of the ordinary approach*. Creative presentations *spark interest of everyone involved*, they are *exceptional and unique* as opposed to *banal*, *conventional*, *clichéd* or *unimaginative*. Best presentations are *compelling and captivating* and use a *style and format different than standard*, they *make the audience think and are unpredictable*.

Recommendations on how to achieve best results include incorporating *a variety of elements* such as *captivating graphic design*, *data visualisation (e.g. diagrams)*, *mind maps*, *thought-provoking images*, *photos*, *drawings*, *video*, and *music to avoid being bland* and to *stimulate imagination, creativity and*

*innovative thinking*. Interestingly, one of the students put the emphasis on the *aesthetic* and *artistic* value of the presentation, indicating that it may even be *extravagant*. At the same time, creative presentations should have a clear structure, i.e., their contents should be logically or *chronologically* arranged.

Still, as one of the respondents remarked, creative presentations are creative in both *contents and form*; in other words, *various tools and ways to convey the message* are applied to attract the attention of the audience but at the same time, it is *informative and educative*. What is important is that the presented material *goes beyond the slides or other visual aids and is enriched with illustrative examples*.

Creative presenters deliver their message in a way that helps the audience understand and remember it. The trick seems to be to select the *key points* (also to make the presentation short) and present them *in an inventive and appealing manner, also from a different perspective than usual*.

Apart from the attractive format, the style of delivery matters; the slides or other visual aids help to deliver the message and should be *clear rather than packed with a lot of text*, more focus should be on *(story)telling and sharing interesting facts and valuable information*. Clearly, reading the text on the slides or notes disqualifies the presentation from the creativity contest, *presenting is primarily about what is told rather than displayed or shown*.

Creative presenters *make their audience curious* and interact with their public in a way that is well thought through, which also allows to flexibly adapt to the participants' needs. Interaction, collaboration and building rapport with the audience may be achieved through *asking and inviting questions*, (e.g., a Q&A session) and *giving tasks* (e.g. quizzes). In fact, one of the possible 'tests' if a presentation is interesting, suggested by respondents, were *active participation* and *willingness to find out more manifested by the number of questions*.

Last but not least, it seems that creative presenters feel at ease in their role and are able to create a *friendly and relaxed atmosphere, especially when talking about difficult topics, not avoiding humour, personal touch or sharing their opinions*. They speak with passion, are engaged and motivated to share knowledge and use *non-verbal communication (their voice and body language)* to attract and keep the audience attention. Finally, creative presentations have also been defined as *dynamic and entertaining*.

### 3. How to teach to present creatively?

To start the class or course in creative presentations effectively, it is recommended to introduce the topic in a warm-up exercise. The example might be a round of introductions '**Do It Differently**', in which the participants are asked to present themselves in a different way than people who spoke before them.

For any presentation, including creative, to be successful, preparation is key, which was stressed by the students participating in the survey: *one can tell if there was effort put in the presentation preparation, it should be prepared in meticulous detail*. In order to prepare well, one may use the '**Thinking in Questions**' technique in a variety of the classic brainstorming. In principle, brainstorming questions precedes brainstorming solutions, and may be applied as a group exercise or discussion '**What questions to ask to prepare a creative presentation?**'.

It may result in questions such as listed below:

- What kind of presentations do you think of as creative?
- What is the goal of the presentation? Is to inform, sell, convince, share knowledge, inspire, motivate or other?
- How should I structure my presentation for maximum impact?
- How to attract the attention of the audience and keep it throughout the presentation?
- How can I differentiate myself from other presenters?
- What unique personal experiences or perspectives can I share?
- How can I make the presentation visually engaging?
- What tools, aids or props to use to meet the objective of the presentation?
- What might be my sources of inspiration? How will I inspire the audience?
- What interactive elements can I include? How can I involve the audience in my presentation?
- What kind of humorous content, anecdotes, or surprises can I incorporate?
- What unexpected twist or element can I introduce?

One of the students remarked that presenting creatively requires *leaving the comfort zone*. In fact, one of the ways to boost creativity is by imposing limitations or difficulties. Oftentimes, it is the lack of resources or built-in constraints that result in original solutions. In teaching creative presentations this principle may be used by defining conditions that will make it impossible for students to present in a standard way; the examples of tasks are listed in the table below.

Table 1. Examples of 'Imposed constraints' tasks.

Limitation category	Task example	Task description	What does it teach?
Time constraint	<b>Elevator Pitch</b>	Presentations must be under 60 seconds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being concise</li> <li>• Being selective</li> </ul>
Time constraint	<b>Dragon's Den</b>	The maximum time to present and sell an idea or product is 3 minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being concise</li> <li>• Being selective</li> <li>• Persuasive communication</li> </ul>
Limited resources	<b>Presentation Without a Presentation</b>	No PowerPoint/Canva/Prezi or other presentation software is allowed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resourcefulness</li> <li>• Creative solutions</li> </ul>
Limited resources	<b>No Visual Aids</b>	No visual aids or props are allowed. Students must rely solely on their voice, body language, and storytelling techniques.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills</li> </ul>
Limited resources	<b>Audio-als</b>	Only audio materials (e.g. music, podcasts, nature sounds) can be used in the presentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resourcefulness</li> <li>• Creative solutions</li> </ul>
Limited resources	<b>Power Shortage</b>	The projector stops working in the middle of the presentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvisation</li> <li>• Handling difficult and stressful situations</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration

Limitations motivate presenters to be creative; on the same note, flexibility of thinking is one of the manifestations of creativity. Like in the example of **Power Shortage**, being confronted with sudden and unexpected changes will require impromptu solutions, for example:

- **Lost Notes** – students may not use notes or text on the slides.
- **Unexpected Interruption** – someone from the group interrupts the presentation, the presenter must handle it, practicing dealing with distractions.

Another variation of the creativity theme is 'a different perspective':

- **Role Reversal** – students present as if they were someone else (e.g., a celebrity, an expert in a different field).
- **Audience-generated Presentation** – the task is to plan the presentation in such a way, that the audience speaking time takes up at least 80% of the presentation time, teaching interacting with the audience.
- **Topic 'Against'** – presenters are given the subject which is contradictory to stereotypes, mainstream ideas or common knowledge – this may help in teaching how to, *spark interest in the most sceptic person in the audience*, as one of the respondents of the survey put it.
- **Team-Swap** – students are requested to continue someone else's presentation mid-way, practising flexibility, stress management and improvisation skills.

Last but not least, teaching creativity is also about shaping attitudes: students should be ready to challenge or even challenge standard ways of presenting. This seems to be a more complex mission and it requires time. Encouraging students to experiment, take risks and practice new ways of presenting is something to do and to remind on a regular basis and on multiple occasions.

#### 4. Conclusions

Teaching creative presentations is more than just refining public speaking skills: it is about sparking interest and inspiring others, fostering originality and audience engagement. Through the survey, identified key characteristics that define a creative presentation were defined, highlighting the importance of innovative thinking, interaction, and visual aids. By implementing training methods such as imposing constraints or improvisation exercises, educators can equip students with the tools to develop and deliver captivating presentations.

Being creative is not an innate talent but a teachable skill that can be nurtured through ongoing practice and venturing new ways of presenting. As classrooms evolve to meet the demands of modern communication, integrating creative presentation techniques can enhance students' ability to convey ideas effectively in academic, professional, and public settings. By continuing to refine and expand the strategies covered in the paper, educators can empower students to become confident, compelling speakers in an increasingly communication-driven world.