Gocha Pecha Kucha: Innovating Student Classroom Presentation

Edwina Bensal, Edna Miraflores, and Neslie Carol Tan

Abstract:

Pecha Kucha (PK) is an innovative presentation style that has been gaining much popularity of late since if properly executed could allow the slideware to complement and enhance the presentation. This method has rich potentials in addressing common problems in a typical oral presentation. Upon investigating 39 informative presentations of Speecom (Speech for Communications) students of De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU) and their respective self-reflections, the study revealed that PK proved to be a more challenging presentation style that entails much preparation. It was indeed able to address common problems of having text heavy slides that encourage over reliance on the slideware. However, it has ushered a different set of problems such as more prominent awkward pauses and lack of eye contact due to the anticipation of slide transitions, difficulties in content and image synchronicity and non-compliance with PK conventions. But despite these challenges, both the students and the researchers do not discount the promising potentials of PK given enough practice and exposure as it observably instills the favorable attributes of discipline and spontaneity in presenters.

Introduction

Powerpoint (PP) is widespread pervasively in various disciplines most especially in education arena – classroom set up, meetings, conferences, and the like. However, the reality showed that many students' presentations fall into several areas as they apply the traditional PP style in presenting. This can be because of heavy text slides, irrelevant graphics, over animated slides, too many slides, and reading all the text in the slides; thus, they failed to effectively communicate (Keller, 2003; McDonald, 2004). In fact, PP can be "one of the best presentation software applications that can help students be better presenters given the right training and exposure, in order for them to have the power to make a point" (Bensal, Miraflores, Misolas, and Tan, 2010). Gallian (1998) even reiterated in his article that this skill can give them an edge not only as students but also as future professionals.

From these concerns, many teachers tried to explore different ways to remedy the weaknesses and to make the presentations effective and successful. Some of them used other methods like Takahashi, Lessig, Kawasaki, and Pecha Kucha (PK). Takahashi and Lessig methods may actually be mistaken as the same but they are different in some aspects. The latter was initialized by Lawrence Lessig, a Harvard Law School professor, who believes that a balance of well-chosen word, phrase, short quotation, and picture which was delivered in 15 seconds per slide will make the entire presentation engaging and challenging (Millichap, 2010). While Takahashi method is the signature presentation technique of Masayoshi Takahashi, a Japanese programmer, who used giant-sized plain text in each of his slide. He imposed that simplicity is enlightening; hence, the use of only one word that would best represent the idea to be explained and together eliminating any design nor any photos as part of the visual must be practiced. Kawasaki method, on the other hand, was named after Guy Kawasaki who first utilized top-ten format (ten major ideas in ten slides) in his presentation. This is later developed to the 10/20/30 method which means having 10 slides, 20 minute presentation, and 30 point text-font size (or bigger) in a single presentation (Reynolds, 2005; Reynolds, 2005; & Kawasaki, 2005). Wagner (2007) in his entry post mentioned another popular method which was invented by Mark Dytham and Astrid Klein who are both architects in Tokyo. They called it Pecha Kucha (PK) and often times referred to as

20x20 presentation because of word/image and time restrictions.

In this PK method, the presenter is still using PP or any other slide wares but s/he is only allowed to utilize 20 slides (with ONE image or word per slide) and each slide should automatically go to the next slide every after 20 seconds. Strictly speaking, the entire presentation can only last for 6 minutes and 40 seconds. This forces novice speakers to prepare ahead of time and make sure that their points are pithy and their slides are economical.

Since this method originated from Japan, Pecha Kucha is a Japanese word which means "the sound of conversation" or "chit chat". This interesting presentation format is an apt challenge to make the entire PP presentation liberating, retaining, and engaging both for the presenter and the audience. Thus, this will break the "fatigue" of the "perfunctory and … disengaging classroom experience" (Edwards, 2010). Indeed, PK is a possible solution to the "death-by-PowerPoint" problem (Jones, 2009). Edwards accentuated that

> …the basic constraint of 20 slides each lasting 20 seconds adds "zip" to any student presentation. 20 seconds is a marvelous amount of time, 1/3 of a minute. Enough time to make a solid point, but not enough time to drone on and on about any point. It forces concision in speaking, and that need to be concise has a corollary effect on the audience: it forces the listener to be more active. I also think that 20 slides is just about the right amount (not too few and not too many) to get a solid grasp (or at least a meaningful gleaning) of a topic.

Notably, speakers who use PK method wherein each slide contains only an image and is accompanied with consistent verbal explanation are said to become successful in their objectives to stimulate their creativity, enhance their communicative skills, and gain audience's attention (Savoy, Proctor, & Salvendy, 2009; Tangen, Constable, Durrant, Teeter, Beston & Kim, 2011). Also creativity comes in choosing the right image for the explanation; thereby, learning to explain things that would best fit the topic and the picture flashed on the slide. Moore and Watson (2010) added that the speakers also learned to focus only on the main points and discuss on a quick rate. In this manner, they learned to distill the information they would present and lessen the chance of redundancy. Hence, the speakers became adept in maximizing his time and simultaneously became skilled in using gaps. As they interspersed the text-based slides between the image-based slides, one can say that s/he performed a high level of intellectual performance.

PK can develop critical thinking which does not only benefit the speakers but also the audience. Through a competent picture and concise explanation, audiences' interest and retention can increase. This style can make the audience easily keep track of the discussion's flow, steadily remember the content and delightfully listen to a presentation. Additionally, the audience has to apply a higher order thinking skill by synthesizing what was explained and presented by the speaker since the speaker has limited time to feed the listeners the information needed.

In De La Salle University-Manila, undergraduate students enroll in Speech and Communication (SPEECOM) class, the third in a series of required general education English courses. This course is expected to train the students become effective speakers and attentive listeners. However, there was no specific point in the curriculum where Powerpoint presentation is given importance because it is commonly believed that students already possess the knowledge and skills necessary to create a meaningful presentation regardless of having taken the SPEECOM course or not. The researchers hope that this can be a helpful step to prepare the students for more demanding presentation requirements in the future.

To shed further light in this aspect, this paper then attempts to discover the effectivity of PK method to the speakers and listeners. This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Can PK be an effective solution to the common problems in students' classroom presentations (e.g. text-heavy slides, etc.)? What are the benefits of PK for the students/presenters?
2. **What problems does the PK method pose to the students/presenters?**

Methodology

Materials

This study used the video-taped presentations and Power Point materials prepared by SPEECOM students for their informative speech presentations. The Power Point materials was based on the premise that the Pecha Kucha method will be used. There was also the premise that a computer, a software program and downloaded materials from the Internet will be utilized in its preparation.

Instruments

The researchers used a rubric for evaluating informative speech presentations from the module recommended by the English department "Keys to Effective Public Speaking" by Plata et al. Each presenter was evaluated by their peers and by their SPEECOM teacher. The researchers likewise created a self-evaluation form for each presenter to fill out after delivering his/her informative speech.

Participants

39 students from one SPEECOM class during Term 3 of SY 2010-2011 were the respondents for this research. These was a mixed group of students from the different colleges in DLSU-Manila.

Originally the number of respondents was 40; however, one student respondent's data was invalidated due to incomplete documents. The student did not submit the peer evaluation form.

Procedure

At the beginning of the Term, the students were informed that one of the major requirements of the course is an informative speech presentation. They were likewise informed that PK method of presentation will be used for their speech presentations. The teacher delivered a lecture on the nature and method of PK method and did her own demonstration of a PK speech presentation.

To prime the students for their PK presentation, the teacher made them go through a series of impromptu speeches in order for the students to gain confidence in speaking before an audience. Aside from this, the students were given a total of two weeks to prepare for their informative speech presentation. This two-week preparation included the topic proposal and approval, outline preparation and revision, consultations and the discussion of the rubrics. The order of student presenters for each scheduled videotaping day was determined through the drawing of lots.

The informative speech presentation lasted for five consecutive sessions with each session featuring eight presenters. Each presentation lasted 6 minutes and 40 seconds. Each presentation was videotaped by the technician in the University's Speech Laboratory. Each presenter was simultaneously evaluated by the teacher and 8-10 other peers. A week after the presentation, the presenters were required to view their presentation and then answer the self-evaluation form (See

Appendix). They were requested to attach on their self-evaluation form a stub issued by the technician in the Speech Laboratory as proof that they viewed their presentation.

Analysis Procedure

To answer the first research question concerning the efficiency of PK in addressing common presentation problems, the researchers classified and tallied all the responses pertaining to the benefits of PK as listed by the student presenters in their self-evaluation forms. Their ratings for the PK method were likewise tallied to ascertain if they deem it efficient. To triangulate the findings, the researchers collected the teacher's evaluation as well as those from the peers. The overall ratings from these evaluations were classified according to the standard university grading system. The purpose of this step is to determine if the audience would validate the student presenters' perceptions of PK's efficiency as a presentation method.

To answer the second research question concerning the problems encountered in using the PK method of presentation, the researcher again classified and tallied all the responses pertaining to problems encountered in PK as listed by the student presenters in their self-evaluation forms. To triangulate these findings, the researchers once again referred to the teacher and the peer evaluation forms. This time, instead of tallying the overall scores given by the teacher and the peers, the comments (specifically the suggestions and improvement areas sections) were classified and tallied. This step serves to crosscheck the self-reported problems against the observations of the general audience.

Results and Discussion

    A. PK as an Effective Solution to the Common Problems in Students' Classroom Presentation and as a Favorable Method for the Student Presenters

Table 1. *Rating of the effectiveness of PK based on the self-evaluation of the student presenters*

Rating	f	%
Highly effective	13	33.33

Moderately effective	21	53.85
Reasonably effective	5	12.82
Slightly effective	0	0
Ineffective	0	0
Total (N)	*39*	*100*

Table 2. *Teacher and Peer Evaluation of the Students' Presentations*

Rating	Teacher Evaluation		Peer Evaluation	
	f	%	f	%
4.0 (97-100) *Excellent*	0	0	0	0
3.5 (93-96) *Superior*	2	5.13	13	33.33
3.0 (89-92) *Very Good*	10	25.64	18	46.15
2.5 (85-88) *Good*	15	38.46	8	20.51
2.0 (80-84) *Satisfactory*	8	20.51	0	0
1.5 (75-79) *Fair*	4	10.26	0	0
1.0 (70-74) *Passed*	0	0	0	0
0.0 (69 and below) *Failed*	0	0	0	0
Total (N)	*39*	*100*	*39*	*100*

The researchers wanted to determine if the overall satisfactory rating extends to the assessment of the teacher as well as of the peers. Thus, Table 2 exhibits the teacher and the peers' evaluation of the speech presentations of the student presenters. This table clearly does affirm the student presenters' favorable ratings for the PK method of presentation in Table 1. Generally, the teacher seems to be stricter with the evaluation, giving the majority (38.46%) a *Good* rating which ranges from 85-88%, while the peers viewed the majority (46.15%) of the presentations as high

as *Very Good* which ranges from 89-92%. But either way, these assessments are valuable to the student presenters in general. In fact, not one presentation clung to the low-achieving *Passed* rating nor has fallen to the *Failed* rating; the lowest rating made by the teacher was *Fair* (which is not a bad rating and only for a mere 10.26% of the group), while the lowest rating for the students was a still favorable *Good*.

Table 3. *Benefits of PK based on the Self-evaluation of the student presenters*

Benefits	*f*	%
Improved organization *(The Powerpoint served as an outline; the pictures served as hints or prompts to the speaker and as guides to the audience; the speakers no longer felt "lost"; it allowed a better and easier flow of the discussion; it helped make the presentation more organized)*	21	53.85
Developed time-consciousness *(PK helped the speakers adjust the pacing of their speeches; it helped the students learn the importance of right timing – speech must coincide with the pictures presented; it help speakers maximize the very exact time allotted to their presentation.)*	14	35.90
Improved summarizing skills *(PK required the students to explain ideas briefly, be direct to the point when explaining, keep things short yet meaningful, be more careful with word choice – concise and precise language only, highlight major ideas and delete trivial details, and even select appropriate photos that represent or condense complex ideas or concepts.)*	13	33.33
Promoted discipline *(PK challenged the students to truly prepare before the speech, plan each slide carefully, familiarize one's self with the pictures, value time management, handle time pressure, and stick to the time limit, etc.)*	11	28.21
Increased spontaneity *(PK kept speakers alert and snappy; it allowed room for improvisation – practice adlib; it challenged speakers to think faster and express their thoughts well; it helped the students avoid reliance on memorizing speeches.)*	8	20.51
Increased confidence *(PK helped reduce speaker anxiety; there's no time to be nervous; it challenged the students to adopt a better composure while presenting.)*	6	15.38

Provided a unique public speaking experience *(PK led to a more interesting, more fun, and different public speaking experience.)*	6	15.38
Facilitated better focus *(PK forced the students to discuss only the essential and relevant information.)*	5	12.82
Removed minor concerns *(PK did not require presenters to press any keys while delivering their speeches.)*	3	7.69
Encouraged creativity *(PK encouraged the students to prepare eye-catching presentations (carefully choosing the pictures to be included); it challenged students to be more creative in their approach on how to explain and describe ideas/information)*	3	7.69
Challenged critical thinking	1	2.56

Note: The ideas written inside the parenthesis per category came from students' evaluation. The researchers decided to include these ideas because they serve as a guide for them to write the discussion; hence, the readers of this research may also find this helpful.

Table 3 shows the list of benefits of using the PK method of presentation as narrated by the student presenters themselves in their post-speech reflection essays. One key finding in this table is that more than half of the group (54%) noted an improved organization of ideas in their speech presentation. The images featured in their slidewares served as prompts to the speakers, allowing them to feel less "lost." These images likewise acted as guides to the audience so they may keep track of the flow of the ideas of the presenters.

With both claimed by at least a third of the group, the benefit of more developed time-consciousness (34%) and improved summarizing skills (33%) (the second and third highest-rating benefits respectively) are actually closely related. The students recognize the highly-precise nature of PK, with each slide shifting to another after exactly 20 seconds. Hence, they feel that the PK method truly challenged them to be extra-keen with the time and especially alert in monitoring their overall speech pace. They realize the need to maximize that 20-seconds-per-slide format, so they are also at once challenged to be direct to the point, choosing the most concise yet meaningful means of explaining their ideas.

Another interesting result shown in this table is the professed improved discipline of nearly a third (28%) of the total student presenters. Given such a "rigid" method of presentation, the students felt compelled to honestly prepare: first, to carefully choose the appropriate pictures that will accurately convey their intended messages, instead of just haphazardly copying and pasting whole paragraphs onto the slides; and second, to genuinely rehearse the whole speech (together with the prepared slideware) to familiarize themselves with the flow and the pacing of the speech. This kind of preparation is indeed a welcome improvement from the previous informative lectures where students just "wing it."

Curiously, out the 39 student presenters, only one acknowledged the potential benefit of the PK method in challenging the speaker's critical thinking. Most of the participants were perhaps more focused on the positive effects of the method on the *delivery* of their speech (e.g. moderate pacing, better visuals, improved overall confidence or composure), overlooking impact of PK in fostering critical thinking in their speech *content*.

It may also be noted that improvements in the delivery are more readily visible, hence adding to their higher frequency of reference in the student reflections. However, based on the researchers' analysis, even if not fully recognized, critical thinking may very well have been a key variable that was challenged in PK method of presentation. According to Verderber (2000), public speaking inherently enhances critical thinking as it encourages speakers to learn and apply thinking skills in the preparation, execution, and even reflection of speeches. In PK method, the different stages such as defining concepts, gathering data, organizing information, and synthesizing all of these are somehow intensified. The students' own admission of getting more finicky in selecting their visuals as well as being more particular with their word choice (in the process of summarizing ideas) already manifest the seeds of critical thinking. Moreover, the careful, strategic planning of their speeches (i.e. what to focus on, which ideas to include/exclude, how to sequence/organize the details) in order to adhere to the strict demands of PK method likewise heavily rely on the skill of thinking critically. This variable though was not readily recognizable to the students when they were reflecting on the benefits of PK method. Still, for the researchers, the lack of reference to critical thinking does not necessarily preclude its actual effective application.

Overall, Table 3 displays a long list of important benefits of PK method in delivering informative speeches. It is thus not quite surprising that Table 1 shows the students' overwhelming appreciation towards this particular method. No student presenter considered it ineffective; a large majority considered PK method moderately effective (54%) to highly effective (33%).

Considering the results shown in Tables 1-3, the researchers may answer that PK seems to be an effective solution to the common problems in students' classroom presentations as noted by Wagner (2007) and Klentzin et al. (2010). The student presenters themselves have acknowledged the numerous benefits that are truly essential in public speaking. Furthermore, the audience seems to have found the presentations satisfactory.

However, since PK method of presentation poses new and rigid conditions, new problems and issues have likewise surfaced and challenged the student presenters. Table 4 below features a list of the common problems reported by the student presenters in using PK method of delivering their informative speeches.

B. The Problems PK Method Pose to the Student Presenters

Table 4. *Common problems encountered using PK method of presentation (based on the Self-Evaluation of the student presenters)*

Common Problems	f	%
Timing *(It is difficult to stick to the 20 seconds per slide; some key points were missed; some speakers were "left behind"; some had to talk faster, thus compromising the quality of the delivery; some had nothing left to say but the presentation was still flashing the same image; synchronizing the images and the speech proved to be a major challenge.)*	37	94.87
Summarizing Ideas *(It was difficult to condense or limit all the information in just 20 seconds per slide.)*	11	28.21

Nervousness *(The pressure of delivering a timed speech led to stuttering, code-switching, and even face-twitching; some ended up having mental block moments)*	9	23.08
Fluidity of the presentation *(It was difficult to transition from one idea to the other; it was also difficult to monitor the slide changes; there were some uncomfortable silences and gaps at some points in the presentations.)*	5	12.82
Creating/Designing the Powerpoint presentation, specifically choosing appropriate pictures *(The graphics had to be relevant and at the same time creative.)*	4	10.26
Familiarity with the topic *(The lack of texts in the slides made it difficult to remember the key points to be discussed in each slide; it may also be due to some last minute change in the topics.)*	3	7.69
None	1	2.56

Note: The ideas written inside the parenthesis per category came from students' evaluation. The researchers decided to include these ideas because they serve as a guide for them to write the discussion; hence, the readers of this research may also find this helpful.

Table 4 shows that for the majority of the respondents, timing was the most encountered problem in using PK method. The 20 seconds exposure per slide contributed to the difficulty in pacing the speech and in synchronizing the explanation with the image on the slide. This problem often left presenters with nothing to say in-between slide transitions or at times having to abruptly cut their explanations short because the visuals have moved on to the next slide. This latter tendency is connected to the second most pressing problem reported by nearly a third (28%) of the student presenters: summarizing ideas to fit 20 seconds. They found it difficult to condense the explanations of complex ideas in just 20 seconds. These top two problems coincide with the second and third benefits of PK (refer to Table 3) reported by the students.

23% of the student presenters identified nervousness as a problem in the use of PK which are manifested in speech weaknesses like stuttering, code-switching and mental block.

Table 5. *Teacher and peer comments on the common problems of the students' presentations*

Common Problems	Teacher Comments		Peer Comments	
	f	%	f	%
Reading too much; lack of eye contact	36	92.31	33	84.62
Awkward pauses; lack of spontaneity	27	69.23	5	12.82
Poor word choice (too informal; too technical)	8	20.51	4	10.26
Lack of confidence	7	17.95	11	28.21
Weak voice projection/modulation	1	2.56	10	25.64
Total (N)	39	100%	39	100%

Table 5 shows that reading the speech and the lack of eye contact were the most common problems identified by the teacher and the peer evaluators (92% and 84%, respectively) in the students' presentations. For the teacher, however, the occurrence of awkward pauses and lack of eye contact (69%) were also identified as a common problem among the presentations. For the students , on the other hand, the lack of confidence and weak voice projection/modulation (28% and 25% respectively) were the other problem areas in the presentations.

Conclusion

Based on the current study, PK proves to be a promising presentation method as it promotes in the student presenters a strong sense of discipline and focus, hence challenging their credibility and convincing power. It also enhances their essential language skills such as making appropriate word choice, summarizing complex ideas, and organizing ideas for coherence (logical sequencing and use of transitions).

However, it is also noted that in using PK method, there is a need for the teacher to provide students with more guided planning pertaining to its execution in terms of:

    1. outlining the major ideas of the speech,

    2. identifying the speech points that require pictures,

3. selecting the appropriate pictures that would accurately and succinctly capture the speech points, and

4. streamlining the images to deliver a coherent speech presentation.

Along with this guided planning, more practice may be needed to fully maximize the potentials associated with the use of PK and address the reported problems (e.g. timing, transitions, etc.) encountered by the student presenters in this study.

Furthermore, since PK is not yet considered as a conventional method of speech presentation in the classroom, a customized rubric for PK presentation has yet to be developed. Without this customized PK rubric, this present study relied on a generic informative speech rubric as its assessment tool. In hindsight, this tool did not seem to adequately measure essential points that need to be evaluated in a PK presentation, such as: adherence to PK conventions (e.g. 20 slides with 20 seconds per slide, automatic shift to the next slide), the significance of the visuals (accurate, relevant, and creative), and the use transitions to connect the images into one coherent and unified discourse. It is therefore recommended that a customized rubric for PK presentation be developed for an effective assessment of the students' performance.

Despite these suggested modifications, PK method can be a creative alternative presentation method to infuse innovation and dynamism in a speech class for (but not exclusive to) university level students. PK veers away from the usual text-heavy slides, verbose and redundant speech flow that characterizes the usual speech presentations. However, given a myriad of techniques of speech presentations (e.g.), the teacher need not impose PK as the *only* method of delivering an informative speech. The ultimate concern is to equip the student presenters to be effective speakers, and based on this study, PK could indeed be one strong contender in aiding the students in delivering effective speech presentations.

Reference list and appendix are subject access request.