

Synchronous Instructional Session (SIS) – PART II

Session Details

My session topic “Deconstructing PowerPoint” was held Sunday, July 10 at 2PM. In attendance were Tho Nguyen and Christy Roberts. The session was targeted to undergraduate college students and meant to provide remediation to students lacking skills using MS PowerPoint (PPT). The purpose of the session is to provide direct instruction to those who are not familiar with the tools and capabilities of PPT. At session conclusion students will be able to use several basic features of PPT to enhance creation and delivery of presentations.

I prepared a simple PPT presentation and presented it on the monitor I shared using Blackboard Collaborate, this presentation included the following slides:

- Introduction page identifying the session.
- Agenda outline.
- Screen-capture of identifying a toolbar based on element selection.
- Questions to ask at the end of each feature demonstration.
- Questions to ask at the end of the session.

With the introduction slide displayed I welcomed the participants explaining the session’s activities and asked that they please interrupt me at any time if they had questions. I also used this time to query attendees about their experiences using the software program. This allowed me to not only gauge their experience level, but confirm they could see the shared screen, hear me and ensured their microphones were working. Before beginning I mentioned that I found it helpful to be hands on when learning a new program and invited them to follow along using their own software. I tend to learn best while having the opportunity to actively participate, especially when being introduced to a new software program. Palloff & Pratt validate this belief by stating “..many students are concrete-active learners, that is, they learn best from concrete experiences that engage their senses.” (Chapter 1/Kindle Loc: 351). The idea being following along would help them later when I wasn’t around to answer questions, allowing them to recall the steps we took. In order to further assist with this I created a step-by-step handout of all the features demonstrated and distributed it at the end of the session.

I displayed the agenda outline slide and identified each of the features I was planning to demonstrate. I then opened a blank PPT file. I chose to share my monitor instead of the program, since I knew I was going to have two PPT windows open and be opening a separate web page, all of which would be displayed on the monitor and broadcast, but not available if I selected to share a specific program. Listed below are those features including highlights of the step-by-step instruction I provided.

- Templates & Tools
 - Explained showcased the various options of how to get started (i.e., open a blank presentation, use a template or open a previous file)
 - Identified the toolbar menus and submenus
 - I used the slide of the screen capture (mentioned above) to demonstrate how an element specific toolbar would display itself.
- Creating and Organizing Slides
 - Created several different slides each with different built in layouts.
 - Demonstrated how to quickly reorganize slides within the navigation panel.
- Adding Text
 - Inserted text and applied various fonts & colors.
 - Demonstrated how to select a text field box.

- Inserting Images
 - Inserted an image (used two different methods).
 - Demonstrated how to resize and move.
- Creating Hyperlinks
 - Applied a hyperlink to the previously added image that opened an external website.
 - Explained several options associated with the hyperlink feature.

Through formative evaluation I was able to assess student learning and engagement as I concluded the demonstration of each of the features. This allowed me to shift focus if the session was not proceeding according to plan (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Each time asking the following questions:

- Was my pace OK?
- Was everything clear and understandable?
- Would you like to revisit any part of demonstration?

At the conclusion of the session I continued assessing student learning and engagement through the following set of questions:

- What, if any of features have you previously explored?
- Was there anything that you were unfamiliar with?
- Were you exposed to anything new that you are excited to try out?
- Was the demonstration helpful to you?
- Would you like to revisit any part of demonstration?

I utilized the application share to share my monitor and presented using the microphone. The participants initially used their microphones but posted questions and replies to queries via the chat window during the session. I also used the recording feature to record the session.

Student Summary Feedback

Two classmates joined me in my session: Tho Nguyen and Christy Roberts. While my learner characteristics were undergraduate students with little to no PPT experience, both my “students” were teachers and utilize PPT teaching nursing students (Tho) and middle schoolers (Christy), so they were both familiar with and have used the program. Christy reported she was actually following along with me in the program on her system. Throughout my session I requested feedback to ensure my pace was acceptable and that everything was clear and understandable. I asked these questions at the end of each feature demonstration. Both Tho and Christy continually reported that I was not only proceeding at a good pace, but my demonstration was easily understandable and provided clear step by step procedures. As the session concluded I was happy to find out they both had not been very familiar with the hyperlink feature, specifically that you could add a hyperlink to an image; so they were happy to see that feature demonstration. Neither of my participants provided any input for improvement. Both felt I met my outlined objectives and purpose of the session.

I followed up with short survey a few days after the session, those questions and responses are provided here:

- How would you describe my effectiveness during the BB Collaborate teaching session?
 - *The speaker was well-prepared, provided clear instructions with visual aid, & guided the learners step by step*
 - *I thought it was very effective. You showed the steps very clearly. You also stop and verified we had no questions or clearly answered the ones we did have.*

- Please identify a strength of the teaching session. What was done well?
 - *The speaker is knowledgeable about the topic.*
 - *Your organization of the information was very nice. The handout was nice as well.*
- Please identify a weakness of the teaching session. What can be improved?
 - *None*
 - *I cannot think of one weakness.*
- What did you learn in the teaching session?
 - *Deconstructing PowerPoint.*
 - *I learned how to hyperlink a picture to the actual website.*
- Did you feel the objectives and purpose of the session were met?
 - *Definitely*
 - *I did feel the objectives were met and the purpose of the session was clearly identified and achieved as well.*

SIS Reflection

I was a little apprehensive at first, but after thinking through the process I settled on designing a software training session. I believe I submitted a good solid plan with achievable goals focusing on basic features of the program to get someone familiar with using it. While my participants were not my target audience, at the end of the session I was happy that they both indicated they had been introduced to something they weren't previously familiar with. Not only being able to get through all the PPT features on my agenda for the session, but also being able to expose someone to a new feature in a program they were already familiar using results in a successful session to me.

My biggest challenge was not only trying to keep pace with everything I wanted to accomplish, but simultaneously using the tools in Collaborate to ensure my students were following along with me and didn't have any questions through monitoring the chat window. I relate it to a juggling act, trying to keep up with everything without dropping something. I now understand when I've attended synchronous sessions why there are usually a few moderators--one or two people presenting and one answering all chat window questions.

Blackboard Collaborate had just recently been updated and the new look was a clean unobstructed layout compared to all the different individual tool windows on the older version. I recorded my session, used the share application, microphone and chat window. I decided against using the polling feature after testing it out, but with more students attending a session it would be beneficial to use. The microphone provided a lot of echoing feedback when several people had it activated at once. We all communicated via the microphone prior to the start of the session but after beginning my students used the chat window to communicate with me. I would respond via the microphone, so the feedback wasn't a noticeable issue throughout the session. I actually noticed it more when I was attending other sessions, and opted to mute it and use the chat window. I was disappointed to learn my chat window didn't save or even display during a test session I did. This may have just been because I was unfamiliar with all the features and how to use them. Prior to leaving my session I copied the chat window to archive the communication from the session. I had no problem using the sharing app feature, I actually shared one of my monitors. This allowed me to have two different PPT files open, access a help window and display a web page. If I would have just selected to share PPT application, I would have only been able to share that one file, another issue I realized during testing. The recording feature was easy to start and then stop when finished.

I thought there were times the presentation was a little choppy and this goes back to the juggling I mentioned earlier. I had created a script to help me stay on track but simultaneously trying to keep up with all the features was hard. This was a choice of how I set up my presentation, with live step by step usage of the program. This allowed for the ability to quickly adapt or show any feature "on-the-fly" or alternatives based on participant input. A major change that could be successfully applied to the session would be to create a PPT with all the screenshots of everything I demonstrated and

through animations each step individually could be displayed allowing me to be more scripted with less stalling (i.e. finding my place) in my session. Advice I'd provide to novice Collaborate users would be to script your presentation out and practice it. While you may not read word-for-word. This gives you an idea of how to pace yourself and how to ensure you are meeting all the goals you set for the session. I also found it helpful to have two monitors and a printed version of my script, large print and double spaced. Having another device (i.e. laptop, iPad, Surface, etc.) could be helpful as well for notes or reference materials especially if you only have one monitor. Having another moderator help monitor the chat window for large classes would be very helpful to ensure everyone's questions are answered without delaying or halting the session.

Feedback as a Student Participant

Color Choices-Basic color principles

This session was presented by Laura Weinrich on Tuesday, July 12 at 2PM. In addition to myself, Erica Wheeler participated. The purpose of the session was to present adult learners with information on the basic principles of color. Utilizing PPT, Laura introduced and started her presentation with the primary, secondary, and tertiary color wheels. She also successfully tackled explaining color perception and included a good visual to aid with her discussion. She answered all my questions regarding this topic and confirmed I understood before continuing. She provided resources and examples of color palettes and how to identify complementary colors. She also provided some instruction on non-complementary color choices--specifically associated with advertisements. As a student, I utilized the hand, chat and microphone tools. Throughout the entire presentation she continually confirmed Erica and I were following and didn't have any questions. At the end she granted us moderator access and quizzed us. While this was a little confusing at first we got the hang of what she was asking and able to answer her questions and complete the empty color wheel together. As a graphic designer, she is definitely a subject matter expert which was demonstrated throughout the presentation. I appreciated she included a personal and a commissioned piece so we could see her work at the end. It was a very enjoyable session.

Basic Box/Cloud Storage

This session was presented by Karen Nazario on Wednesday, July 13 at 2PM. In addition to myself, Laura Weinrich participated. The purpose of the session was to provide basic knowledge about cloud storage, its benefits, the available programs to use, and how it works. The learner characteristics identified were anyone with basic computer/internet skills aged 10 and up. The presentation was well thought out, clear and very informative. A PPT was utilized to present information and included a video that effectively demonstrated the process. Karen identified the benefits of cloud storage and also included reasons why some people may be apprehensive to use it. A variety of free and fee service providers were identified. I was introduced to a service provider (SugarSync) I hadn't been aware of and found it interesting that it was rather popular amongst researchers. Her pace was consistent and she continually asked questions to ensure Laura and I were following and understanding the points presented. I utilized the microphone, but mainly communicated via the chat feature during the presentation as did Laura. All entries in the chat window were responded to verbally throughout the presentation. It was an enjoyable session and I liked her video selection.

Reference

Palloff, R. & Pratt, K. (2007). Building Online Learning Communities (2nd edition) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.