CREATING PRESENTATIONS ON ICT CLASSES

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Abstract. The article focuses on the creation of presentations on ICT classes. The first part highlights the most important steps when creating a presentation. The main idea is, that the computer presentation shouldn't consist only from the technological part, i.e. the editing of the presentation in a computer program. There are many steps before and after this, and these are presented in the article. In the second part of the article the work of first year students is analyzed. These students were asked to write an essay on a computer related topic of their choice, to make a presentation and give a talk based on their essay.

Key words: ICT teaching, computer presentation, communication

1. Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) became an important part of our society. Using technology to search and organize information, to present this information in various forms (i.e. document (essay), poster, diagram, presentation, documentary film, etc) became essential skills for students and employees.

The article focuses during the creation of presentations on ICT classes, as making presentations is one of the key ICT competence.

The first part highlights the most important steps when creating a presentation. It is important, that this process doesn't consist only from the computer presentation creation step. It starts with choosing the topic and collecting information and materials; then it continues with processing the information and selecting the most relevant ones. The next step is to make a plan of the presentation. Only when the plan is ready, students should start to create the presentation on the computer. After the presentation is created, students should make notes about what they would say when using this presentation for a talk; and they should practice this talk. To give the talk based on the computer presentation is an important step, as student could evaluate better their work. After the talk a discussion on the presentation's topic and on the talk's style should be carried out. The discussion related with the topic of the talk gives the possibility for the audience to put questions related with the presented topic and to evaluate the presenter's knowledge about the topic. During the discussion about the presentation and the talk the presenter gets a feedback from the audience about the presentation style. In this way the presenter could improve her/his computer presentation and reflect on what should have done differently during the talk. Following the above-presented steps, students gain not only technological skills, but also communication skills, information searching, processing and selecting abilities.

In the second part of the article the work of first year students is analyzed. These students were asked to write an essay on a computer related topic on their choice, to make a presentation and give a talk based on their essay.

2. Creating a presentation

ICT shouldn't deal only with the technological part, as how to use an editor program. It is a more complex subject, which should develop skills as Internet searching, information processing, communication, presentation of the information, etc. In this section we present the most important steps when creating a presentation.

An important ICT skill is the **Internet searching skill**.

Gunn and Hepburn (2003) have evaluated 198 Canadian 12th grade high-school students' (average age 17,5) Internet searching abilities [2]. 5,1% of the students perceive their searching abilities poor, 13,6% fair, 50% good, and 31,3% very good. Most of the students (71%) have learnt how to search the Internet by themselves, only 39,8% have learnt it from a teacher. 48% of the students have never used boolean operators; 77,8% didn't know, how to eliminate commercial site; 70,7% didn't know how to search for images.

Krausz-Princz (2006) has conducted a research on 200 university students from Hungary [4]. 10,5% of the students perceive their searching abilities poor, 56,8% fair, and 32,7% good. Most of the students (60%) have learnt to seek information on the Internet by themselves; only 21% have learnt it from a teacher. Usually students give one or two keywordsin a simple search window, 76% of the students have never used boolean operators, 53,5% have never used " " to search as phrase. As regarding advanced searching, 98,5% doesn't know how to eliminate commercial sites, 93% don't know how to limit the search to pages updated in the last three months.

Head and Eisberg (2009) have carried out a survey in U.S.A. among 2318 university students [3]. The purpose of their work was to identify the college students' key information needs and the resources, which they acces when collecting data for a course related research. Most of the students use the course readings, Google search and scholary research databases when seeking for materials for a essay.

The Internet contents a lot of information; but not everything is correct what is on the net. Thus another important skill is to **discriminate the correct information** and to **select the most important** one. It is important, that students learn, that they should read more sources and process the information. When planning the presentation based on the found information, it is important to choose the most relevant information.

The next step would be to **make a plan of the presentation**. Nagyová and Turčáni have studied the presentation made by 150 university students in Czech Republic [8]. Students were explicitly asked to make a plan of their presentation, and all students succeed to do this. 121 students elaborated a scenario into individual snaps; the remaining 29 students described their scenario in words. From those students, who planed the scenario using individual snaps, only 101 students described at least in words the objects desired to appear in the snaps. Only 7 students elaborated the scenario in a graphical form. In most of these scenarios students are full of creative ideas. In the final product only 36% of students succeeded to follow precisely their scenario. The rest of the students made smaller or greater changes to the scenario during the realization of the computer presentation. These changes are due to the fact that students lack ability to realize their ideas. Thus **technical skills**, as making and formatting pictures; erasing part of the pictures and setting transparency; working with audio [8]; editing films, etc are required.

It is important how **to choose the content of each slide.** A slide should present well-related information. All the media used on a slide should help in presenting that information. Thus, beside the text, the choice of the pictures, diagrams, movies, etc is essential. In order to be able to choose the most appropiate media object, **media literacy skills** are needed. Students should know, how to read the message of a photo, film; how to express some message using different media forms, how to combine different media. Thus another important aim of teaching ICT is to develop students' media literacy skills [7]. When practicing the use of different utilitary programs, well-planed activities could help both for developing media literacy and technical skills [6].

Animations could be useful, if they are well selected. The animation in a presentation is for emphasizing something, or for attracting the audience attention. So we shouldn't use too many animations, and we have to think carefully, which animation to use. For example, it is boring when a text coming in character-by-character; and when this is used frequently in a presentation, starting to be annoying. Also, the animation should fit the talk given based of the computer presentation. For example, if we use an enumeration, the items of it should come in separately, only if we speak a while about each item; otherwise this animation is useless.

Using a correct language is very important for an effective communication. Marchis (2007) have studied the computer presentations made by 76 students in Romania [5]. The most usual mistakes related with the use of the language are: students don't use the special characters of the language and the correct typewrithing rules; they make grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Another aspect neglijed on ICT classes is **aestetics**. It is important from the point of view of the communication, as an aesthetical media arouses attention. In [5] the following mistakes are identified: unadecvat choose of the background and text color, thus the text is hard to read; the use of an image as background, which also impairs the readability; the uncoerence of the used style; the ununiformity of the used images. It is important how to choose the colors in a presentation. If the background is light, the font color should be dark (for example black characters on white background, dark blue characters on white background); if the background is dark, the characters should be light (for example white characters on dark blue background). We should avoid those color schemes, which are difficult to read (for example black characters on dark blue background, red characters on green background). We should avoid using an image as a background, because the image has different colors, and maybe some part of the text will be difficult to read. It is recommended, that each slide of a presentation has the same design, this gives a uniform character to the presentation. Thus students should learn how to create a **presentation design.** Students are used to select one design from those available in the program, but unfortunately not all of these designs are satisfactory from aesthethical point of view.

Usually ICT classes deal only with editing of a presentation, and rarely give the possibility to students to give a talk based on their presentations. **Presenter skills** are very important, and they can be developed only by practice. Bhattacharyya and Sargunan (2009) have conducted a research in Malaysia among 200 university students about their perception on communicative competence [1]. Students found, that the most important presenter skills and attributes are confidence level, methodology, and visual presentation. As regarding language skills, they considered that avoiding complex terms, correct pronunciation and diction are important for an effective oral presentation.

When learning how to give a talk, feedback from the audience is essential. Thus it is important, that after each student's presentation a discussion on the positive and negative aspect of the talk is carried out. For this discussion the audience should get a set of criteria for evaluating each presentation.

3. Research methodology

The research was carried out during the first semester of the 2009/2010 university year. 73 first year university students from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science, Babes-Bolayi University have participated. These students have taken the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) discipline. During this course, among other subjects, they have learnt about searching and selecting information, making a computer presentation, giving a talk based on this presentation.

Students were asked to choose a computer related topic, write an essay, then give a 10 minutes talk about their work, using a computer presentation. These presentations were analyzed from more point of views: content, structure, aestetics, language, and talk.

4. Results

In Table 1 the most frequently observed presentation errors are summarized.

The first category is related with the content. The results shows, that students are not able to select the most relevant information. 25 of them (34,25%) put too much information in the presentation or/and on a slide. It is important to highlight, that this plus information are usually statistical one, it makes the presentation to be difficult to follow and boring. There are presentations without any interesting or new information. The student should have changed the topic, if he/she couldn't find any relevant information.

As regarding the aesthetics of the presentations, the most frequent errors were related with the choice of the colors and of the media (text, image, etc) size. These errors are not only corrupts the aesthetics of the prsentation, but also makes it difficult to follow. If the colors are not appropiate chosen, the

audience has difficulties in reading the text. Is the same result, if the size of the text is too small. From pure aesthetic point of view, it is good, if the presentation has a design. 19 students (26,03%) didn't use a design for their presentation. This gives the impression, that the presentation is a collage of different presentations.

A presentation usually should have a well-set structure. It should start with an introduction, which has the main purpose to raise the audience curiosity. The contents should be divided in parts, and each part should be presented separately. One slide should contain only related information/ideas. In the end of the presentation conclusions should be formulated. 13 of the students (17,81%) didn't have an introduction part in their presentation, 21 of them (28,77%) didn't write conclusions.

Language mistakes were related mostly with the correct typewriting rules, but there were some presentations with spelling and/or grammatical mistakes, too.

Table 1. Identified presentation errors

	Presentation errosrs	**Number of students**
Content	The slides contain too much information.	25
	The information put on the slides is not always relevant for the topic of the talk.	4
	Doesn't contain new information compaired with the course materials.	5
	Contains incorrect information.	7
	Contains too many pictures.	16
	Contains not adecvate animations.	13
	The presentation doesn't contain interesting information.	15
Aesthetics	The presentation doesn't have a design, the slides design changes from a slide to the next one.	19
	Inappropiate choose of the colors.	12
	Not suitable fontsize.	7
	The student put more pictures on the same slide, thus the size of a picture is too small.	8
	Using "underline" for highlighting an idea.	3
Structure	The struture of the presentation is not appropiate for a talk.	1
	The presentation doesn't contain an introduction.	13
	The presentation doesn't contain conclusions.	21
Language	Doesn't follow the correct typewriting rules.	10
	The presentation contains spelling mistakes.	3
	The presentation contains grammatical mistakes.	7
	There are parts of the presentation, where the special characters of the language is not used.	5
	Incorrect pronunciation of some words.	1
Talk	The student reads all the text from his/her notes.	14
	The slides contain whole sequences, and the student reads all the text from the slides.	11
	The slides contain only ideas, and the students reads only these keywords, without completing them with explanations.	6
	The presenter skips slides	2
	The presenter is not attentive while reading the text from his/her notes, and the actual slide is not in concordance with the talk.	2
	The presentation contains more pictures and the student doesn't give any explanations, observation guides for the pictures.	23
	The presentation contains animation/simulation and the student doesn't give any explanation on the animation/simulation.	1
	The student can't answer the questions related on some ideas from the presentation.	5
	There are moments, when the student doesn't know, how to continue the presentation.	2

When giving a talk, it is very important, that the presenter speaks fluently, doesn't read all the text from his/her notes or from the slides. Unfortunately, 31 students (42,47%) couldn't present fluently their work. This could have more reasons: lack of self-confidence (to be sure, that he/she would remember what to say, better read it); unsufficient preparation; students are not used with giving a talk. The lack of fluent presentation skill implies other presenter mistakes too. Because students are busy with concentrating on their notes, they are not attentive on the slides, so could happen, that the presenter skip slides or the narration is not in concordance with the content of the shown slide.

Another aspect to consider is that there are students, who don't understand well the topic of their presentation, thus can't answer questions or explain pictures, animations, and simulations. This is strange, as they had the right to choose the topic. Perhaps, they didn't spend too much time on reading the materials about their topic; they didn't search for another source when they hadn't understood some ideas.

5. Conclusion

The research shows, that students are not used with giving a talk. Thus they make many errors, starting from the selection of the topic and the most relevant information for that topic; creating the presentation design; planning the content of each slide; and giving the talk.

Presenter skills are very important in our digital age, thus students should be trained how to give a talk. In many cases on ICT courses students only learn how to make the presentation on the computer. Usually teachers don't care about the content of the presentation, they concentrate only on the technological part: inserting text and different object, formatting text and different objects, setting animations and slide transitions, etc. Issues related with the content, structure, aesthetics, and language of the presentations should be discussed too. Also, students should have the opportunity to practice how to give a talk.

Teacher's perception on ICT teaching should change. ICT is not only technology, it ment to develop very various and complex skills.

Literature

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