

Transforming Academic Presentation Pedagogy through the Implementation of Experiential Learning in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The ability to deliver effective academic presentations is an essential communicative competence for university students, particularly within language and literature education. Nevertheless, many students encounter persistent difficulties in articulating ideas coherently, confidently, and persuasively within academic forums. This study aims to examine the contribution of experiential learning approaches in enhancing academic presentation skills among undergraduate students in higher education contexts. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research was conducted among Indonesian language education students at a state university. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis of student performance both prior to and following the pedagogical intervention. The experiential learning model was operationalized through project-based activities, structured peer feedback, critical self-reflection, and authentic practice sessions. Findings reveal a marked improvement in students' presentation structure, verbal fluency, utilization of visual media, and audience engagement. Beyond technical proficiency, students demonstrated heightened self-confidence and intrinsic motivation, stemming from active involvement in a contextualized and meaningful learning process. These results underscore that experiential learning not only cultivates technical competencies in academic presentations but also fosters higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and collaborative dispositions. Theoretically and practically, this study affirms the imperative to integrate experiential learning more extensively within language education curricula to nurture students' professional and transferable skills. Future research is recommended to assess the longitudinal impact of this model and explore its adaptability across diverse disciplinary domains.

Keywords: Academic Presentation, Experiential Learning, Higher Education, Language Education, Student-Centered Pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving discourse surrounding the reform of tertiary education, the imperative to equip undergraduates with sophisticated, transferable communicative competencies—especially within the context of academic presentation—has emerged as a focal point of pedagogical inquiry and innovation. As global academic and professional environments become increasingly multimodal, interdisciplinary, and performance-driven, there exists an acute demand for graduates who can communicate with clarity, credibility, and rhetorical agility. However, despite widespread acknowledgment of these needs, pedagogical practice within the academy remains disproportionately tethered to antiquated instructional paradigms. These conventional models, grounded predominantly in passive learning modalities such as lectures and unidirectional knowledge transmission, fail to

cultivate the embodied rhetorical dexterity and critical communicative agency that contemporary professional and academic settings require (Rodrigues, 2023; Wang et al., 2021).

This pedagogical inertia contributes to a persistent and increasingly untenable gap between the communicative competencies expected of graduates and the instructional approaches utilized to develop them. Students subjected to traditional presentation instruction frequently lack opportunities for iterative practice, authentic engagement, and feedback-rich environments—conditions necessary for fostering presentational fluency, strategic coherence, and audience awareness (Fejzic et al., 2016). In this regard, the limitations of conventional pedagogy are not merely technical but epistemological: they reflect a failure to reconceptualize the learning process as participatory, dynamic, and contextually responsive.

Compounding this issue is the intensification of labor market expectations that graduates demonstrate not only content expertise but also high-level communication adaptability in diverse and often unpredictable professional scenarios. As knowledge economies pivot toward value systems centered on interdisciplinarity, digital literacy, and interpersonal intelligence, the ability to present information persuasively and ethically becomes as critical as disciplinary mastery (Voutetaki, 2024; Jiménez et al., 2021). Moreover, in a society that increasingly privileges dynamic oral communication, these demands present significant pedagogical challenges that require institutions to look beyond conventional instruction. Traditional curricula often overlook the contextual and performative dimensions of academic communication, thus failing to adequately prepare students for the multimodal and improvisational demands of contemporary professional settings.

Despite this robust evidentiary foundation, the uptake of experiential learning within the domain of academic presentation remains inconsistent and fragmented. Many institutions continue to privilege content transmission and summative assessment over iterative practice and formative feedback, thereby limiting students' opportunities to engage in authentic communicative scenarios. Furthermore, where experiential practices are adopted, they are often isolated within elective modules or treated as co-curricular enhancements rather than being structurally integrated into the curriculum. This compartmentalization hinders the scalability and sustainability of experiential innovations, leading to uneven outcomes and student preparedness across departments and disciplines. Without systematic embedding, experiential learning remains peripheral to core curricular strategies and fails to leverage its full potential in transforming communicative instruction.

Experiential learning has emerged as one such transformative approach. Anchored in well-established theoretical frameworks, particularly David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), experiential pedagogies redefine learning as an active, recursive process. Kolb's model emphasizes a four-phase cycle—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—through which learners engage with and internalize knowledge in contextually meaningful ways (Kolb, 1984; Reid et al., 2021). Within higher education, ELT has been operationalized through various high-impact practices including case-based learning, simulations, role-plays, internships, and student-led

seminars. These activities foster an integrative mode of learning that blends cognitive engagement with practical skill acquisition (Smith et al., 2023; Rath & Rock, 2021). By merging theory and practice in immersive formats, such pedagogies align with constructivist principles and support the holistic development of communication competence.

A substantial body of research has documented the efficacy of experiential approaches in cultivating presentation-specific competencies. When learners engage in context-rich, performance-based environments—such as mock conference panels, peer-reviewed classroom talks, or community-facing presentations—they tend to demonstrate significant improvements in rhetorical precision, vocal and bodily control, and audience engagement (Abeyasiriwardhane, 2020). Moreover, the scaffolding of formative peer feedback, collaborative rehearsal, and structured self-assessment supports the development of metacognitive awareness and adaptive communication strategies (Coffey & Davis, 2019). These interventions collectively constitute a pedagogical ecology that not only enhances the acquisition of technical competencies but also promotes dispositional qualities such as confidence, openness to critique, and reflective judgment. Additionally, iterative engagement with authentic tasks nurtures professional identities and strengthens students' commitment to lifelong learning. Experiential learning, in this respect, offers not just technical skill-building, but a reconceptualization of self as a communicative agent embedded within professional discourse communities.

Equally integral to experiential presentation pedagogy is the cultivation of critical reflection. Reflection serves as the cognitive and affective bridge between experience and learning, enabling students to interrogate their performance, assess the efficacy of their strategies, and reframe communicative challenges as opportunities for growth. Research consistently affirms the transformative potential of structured reflective practices—such as guided journals, post-presentation debriefs, and dialogic peer discussions—in deepening learners' rhetorical self-awareness and fostering epistemic agency (Radović et al., 2021). Bhati and Song (2019) further note that reflective engagement instills a sense of learner ownership and intrinsic motivation, two variables closely correlated with long-term skill transfer and professional efficacy. These findings illustrate that reflection is not an auxiliary component but a cornerstone of effective experiential pedagogy. In fact, students who engage in regular reflective cycles often demonstrate greater capacity for adaptive thinking, critical listening, and rhetorical improvisation—all essential attributes in high-stakes communication contexts.

These theoretical and practical insights align with broader macro-trends in higher education that emphasize student agency, authentic assessment, and lifelong learning. As educators and institutions grapple with questions of curricular relevance and graduate employability, experiential learning offers a compelling model that aligns pedagogical practice with institutional mission. Empirical work by Salinas-Navarro et al. (2024, 2022) demonstrates that communication curricula infused with collaborative, feedback-oriented experiential components yield measurable gains in student learning, engagement, and retention. Jaakkola (2017) adds that such approaches, by foregrounding peer learning and social accountability, create inclusive spaces conducive to iterative improvement and dialogic exchange. In parallel, these practices foster a culture of co-construction in the classroom, where learners act not merely as knowledge recipients but as agents of inquiry

and innovation. This pedagogical shift from consumption to co-creation empowers students to take ownership of their learning trajectories and become reflective practitioners capable of continuous growth.

This study therefore seeks to advance both theoretical understanding and pedagogical practice by systematically examining the implementation and outcomes of experiential learning strategies in the teaching of academic presentation. The research specifically investigates the extent to which experiential learning methods impact students' confidence, rhetorical competence, and reflective capacities in academic speaking contexts. Drawing on student narratives, classroom observations, and reflective artifacts, the study explores how experiential interventions mediate the alignment between theoretical communication constructs and their practical enactment. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of literature concerned with bridging the theory-practice divide in communication pedagogy. Moreover, by centering students' lived experiences as sites of inquiry and transformation, the research underscores the value of participatory learning design in cultivating academic and professional communicators. It is hoped that the insights from this study will inform scalable instructional models capable of responding to the communicative demands of the 21st-century knowledge economy. By situating academic presentation training within a robust experiential framework, this research aims to illuminate pathways for equipping learners with enduring, transferrable, and ethically grounded communication proficiencies.

In conclusion, embedding experiential learning within academic presentation instruction represents a critical intervention into entrenched pedagogical paradigms. It reconceptualizes communication not as a set of transferable skills to be acquired in abstraction, but as a situated, relational practice that must be cultivated through experience, feedback, and reflection. This study contributes to ongoing efforts to reimagine higher education as a transformative space in which learners are not only prepared to present but are empowered to influence, persuade, and lead with communicative integrity and confidence. In so doing, it offers a roadmap for educators, curriculum designers, and institutional leaders committed to fostering communicative excellence through evidence-based, student-centered pedagogy.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology with an embedded case study design to investigate the pedagogical transformation within the course "Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa," specifically through the structured integration of experiential learning principles. The embedded case study approach was chosen over a holistic case study in order to allow analysis at multiple units within the bounded system of a single course, consistent with Yin's (2018) typology. The unit of analysis was the student learning experience in presentation-based instructional contexts, while the case boundaries were defined by the duration of one academic semester, within the "Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa" course at Institut Pendidikan Indonesia. The case study approach was selected for its analytical depth and its ability to capture the complex interplay of instructional practices, learner behaviors, and contextual influences in a bounded educational setting. This design facilitated a fine-grained examination of how experiential

strategies influence the cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains of student learning in presentation-oriented instruction (George & Clevenger, 2019; Salinas-Navarro et al., 2024).

2.2 Participants and Data Sources

Participants were drawn from Institut Pendidikan Indonesia, focusing on final-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education program. A total of 32 students ($N = 32$) were selected using purposive sampling based on their enrollment in the “Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa” course, which was explicitly designed to incorporate experiential learning elements. The participant cohort represented a diverse academic profile and communicative aptitude spectrum. The group included 21 female and 11 male students, with ages ranging from 21 to 24 years. The average GPA of participants was 3.42 on a 4.00 scale, indicating a generally strong academic standing. All participants had completed prerequisite coursework in communication and pedagogy, ensuring a baseline understanding of presentation principles prior to the intervention.

In accordance with research ethics protocols, all participants were informed of the study’s objectives, procedures, and their rights as research subjects. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and students were assured that participation was voluntary and would not affect their academic evaluation or standing within the course.

The course emphasized collaborative peer-based engagement, performance-driven presentation tasks, and iterative reflection. These pedagogical conditions rendered the course an optimal environment for probing the operationalization and outcomes of experiential learning in a disciplinary context.

2.3 Research Instruments

To capture both the cognitive development and subjective meaning-making processes of learners, the research deployed a multi-modal suite of qualitative instruments: reflective journals, curated learning portfolios, self-assessment rubrics, semi-structured interviews, and systematic classroom observations. Each instrument was carefully designed and piloted prior to formal data collection to ensure its validity and credibility.

Reflective journals followed a structured weekly prompt format, guiding students to answer questions such as “What strategies did you use during your presentation?” and “What would you do differently next time?” These prompts were derived from Kolb’s experiential learning stages and were validated through expert review by two pedagogical specialists in communication and language education. A sample journal entry might include reflections like: *“I realized I didn’t make eye contact because I was nervous, and reading from notes made it worse. Next time I’ll rehearse with a friend to get used to audience engagement.”*

The learning portfolios documented students’ presentation development across the semester. These included initial slide drafts, annotated feedback from peers and instructors, final presentation videos, and personal reflection notes. The structure of the portfolio was

modeled after prior experiential learning templates (Crogman et al., 2023) and validated by comparing pilot portfolio samples against learning outcomes and rubric criteria.

Self-assessment rubrics were co-designed by the course instructors and research team and were directly aligned with presentation performance indicators including clarity, vocal delivery, non-verbal communication, audience engagement, and message coherence. Rubric items were anchored with behaviorally explicit descriptors, for example: *“Eye contact was maintained with all parts of the audience and not just the screen.”* Internal reliability of the rubrics was reviewed using a test group of 8 students from the previous semester, and inter-rater agreement was confirmed among three faculty raters.

Semi-structured interview protocols included both fixed and adaptive questions. Core items explored emotional states before/after presenting, preparation strategies, and interpretation of feedback. Example questions included: *“Can you describe how peer feedback influenced your final performance?”* and *“What part of presenting was most challenging for you, and why?”* The protocol was piloted with two non-participant students and refined for clarity and flow.

Classroom observations were guided by an observation checklist, adapted from George & Clevenger (2019), with indicators including physical engagement, response to audience cues, and presentational structure. Observers were trained in two calibration sessions to ensure consistency in rating behaviors. Observation results were corroborated by video recordings for reliability.

This triangulated and systematically validated approach ensured data richness, interpretive depth, and methodological trustworthiness.

2.4 Data Collection and Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a full academic semester. Reflective journals and learning portfolios were collected in three iterative phases: at the initial stage (Week 2), midpoint (Week 8), and conclusion (Week 15) of the course. Interviews were conducted during the final two weeks with a subset of 12 participants, ensuring both representational breadth and analytic depth. Classroom observations were carried out weekly, specifically during student-led presentation sessions. Observational notes were corroborated by audiovisual recordings to reinforce the reliability and accuracy of behavioral interpretations.

All data were stored on a secure, password-protected cloud server accessible only to the core research team. Participants' names were replaced with coded identifiers in all documents and transcripts. Hard copies of signed consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's office. Digital backups were encrypted to further safeguard sensitive information. Data will be retained for five years following publication, in accordance with institutional policy, and will then be permanently destroyed.

To manage researcher bias, the study implemented several strategies. First, reflexive journaling was maintained by each researcher to document personal assumptions, reactions, and methodological decisions throughout the research process. Second, team-based peer debriefings were held biweekly to surface and challenge potential biases in interpretation. Finally, member checking was conducted with selected participants to verify the accuracy of

thematic summaries and preliminary findings. These measures ensured critical self-reflection and transparency, enhancing the study's credibility and trustworthiness.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis, encompassing familiarization, code generation, theme development, theme refinement, definition, and synthesis. This method was deemed appropriate due to its methodological rigor and adaptability in analyzing complex qualitative datasets derived from multimodal sources (Yang et al., 2021; Mete, 2019). The analytical process was further scaffolded by Kolb's experiential learning model (1984) and the mARC pedagogical framework, both of which provided conceptual anchors to interrogate constructs such as authenticity, reflection, and iterative practice (Radović et al., 2021).

The initial coding was carried out by two members of the research team who had prior experience with qualitative data analysis and had undergone a short training workshop on Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method, facilitated by a qualitative research specialist. Each coder independently reviewed and coded a subset of transcripts to establish a preliminary codebook. Intercoader agreement was calculated and discussed in weekly calibration meetings, and discrepancies were resolved through negotiated consensus. This process ensured both consistency and reflexivity throughout the analysis. NVivo software facilitated efficient data management and thematic mapping. This analytic configuration yielded a robust interpretive model detailing the interplay between experiential processes, reflective sophistication, and the development of presentational fluency.

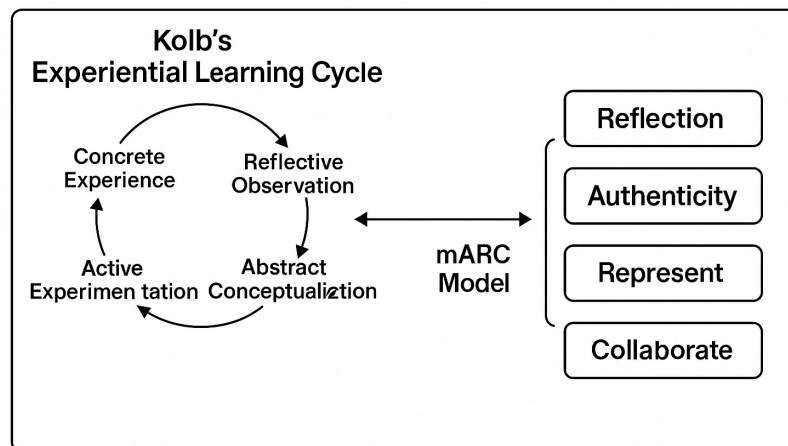


Figure 1. Analytical Framework of Experiential Learning in Presentation Pedagogy

This diagram illustrates the alignment between data sources (reflective journals, portfolios, interviews, observations) and the stages of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, contextualized through the mARC model dimensions (reflection, authenticity, represent, collaborate). It captures the recursive and integrative dynamics underpinning the experiential learning process in presentation-based pedagogy.

Through the application of a theoretically grounded and methodologically robust design, this study offers a comprehensive inquiry into the pedagogical affordances of experiential learning within the domain of academic presentations. The deliberate integration of multi-sourced data and layered analysis provides a foundation for empirically supported instructional innovation, addressing the evolving communicative demands of higher education curricula.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and analyzes the research findings in relation to the study's objectives and theoretical framework. It highlights how experiential learning impacts students' academic presentation skills through multi-source data analysis.

3.1 Findings

The core findings in this section stem from a triangulated analysis of reflective journals, student portfolios, self-assessment rubrics, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Each source offers distinctive perspectives on how experiential learning (EL) interventions have shaped students' academic presentation competencies. Organized thematically, the findings respond directly to the central research questions by tracing cognitive, behavioral, and metacognitive developments throughout the learning process. This thematic articulation also sets the stage for the ensuing critical discussion, linking the data to both established and emerging pedagogical theories.

3.1.1 Transformation of Presentation Strategies and Reflective Awareness

An in-depth analysis of students' reflective journals reveals a marked evolution in their approach to academic presentations, characterized by a substantive shift in strategic execution and a deepening of reflective awareness, both of which unfolded progressively through sustained engagement in experiential learning frameworks. At the inception of the course, student cognition and affective orientation were predominantly shaped by anxiety-driven responses to the communicative demands of public speaking. Reflections captured during this phase were largely descriptive and emotively charged, underscoring apprehensions related to technical readiness and judgment from peers. This pattern signified an absence of internalized evaluative mechanisms necessary for effective rhetorical delivery.

Early journal entries commonly conveyed the perception of presentations as perfunctory tasks rather than as platforms for strategic discourse. This orientation was accompanied by limited appreciation for rhetorical architecture, including elements such as narrative cohesion, vocal dynamics, and embodied delivery. Consequently, students placed disproportionate emphasis on rote memorization of content, often relying on scripted narration with minimal attention to the dynamic, interactive nature of audience engagement.

As students engaged with structured experiential learning modalities—comprising iterative practice sessions, reflective exercises, and dialogic feedback from instructors and peers—a discernible transformation occurred. Students began to exhibit an enhanced critical consciousness regarding their communicative performance, including an awareness of audience responsiveness and the semiotic value of paralinguistic cues. This developmental

trajectory reflects the consolidation of metacognitive faculties, rooted in authentic learning environments and iterative cycles of action and reflection. As illustrated by a participant:

"I was very nervous and didn't know where to look. I just wanted to finish quickly."
(M2)

This comment demonstrates a purely affective orientation with minimal strategic awareness. Following sustained exposure to experiential pedagogies, this same participant noted:

"I just realized the importance of matching body language with the message I wanted to convey. I learned this after watching the video recording of my own presentation."
(M2)

Parallel transformations were evident in students' preparatory processes. Initially, presentation design was ad hoc and unstructured, lacking deliberate modulation of tone or expression.

"During the first practice, I just spoke without thinking about expression or intonation." (M14)

Yet, as students accumulated experience and engaged more rigorously in reflective praxis, they reported meaningful recalibrations:

"During my first presentation, I spoke too fast and was unaware that my facial expression was tense. But after two practice sessions and rereading my reflection journal, I started to think about how to open the presentation in a friendly way and make the audience feel comfortable." (M14)

This qualitative progression from rudimentary, affect-laden narratives to sophisticated metacognitive insights underscores the efficacy of structured reflection. Students transitioned from merely identifying performance gaps to articulating and implementing concrete, evidence-informed strategies for improvement.

"I only focused on memorizing the content. I didn't think that eye contact was important." (M25)

After critical engagement with feedback and observation, the same student reflected:

"Reflection after the first session made me realize that I focused too much on content but forgot about eye contact and voice variation. In the final session, I tried to convey the message as a story, and the audience responded better." (M25)

Notably, 26 of the 32 participants explicitly acknowledged that reflective journaling enabled them to uncover overlooked technical deficiencies, including pace control, non-verbal expressiveness, and facial affect regulation. More importantly, reflection evolved into a forward-looking instrument that supported strategic anticipation and planning for future presentations. This behavioral shift denotes an emergent capacity for self-regulation and intentionality, both key attributes of metacognitive competence.

Theoretically, these findings substantiate core tenets of reflective pedagogy, emphasizing that transformation in learning outcomes is predicated on deliberate cognitive

engagement and behavioral calibration. Experiential learning, in this regard, serves not merely as an instructional tool but as an epistemic framework through which students reconceptualize academic communication as an intentional, iterative, and contextually grounded endeavor.

3.1.2 Evolution of Visual and Verbal Artifacts within Student Portfolios

The student portfolios provide a nuanced chronicle of the progressive enhancement of presentation competencies, capturing both visual sophistication and verbal articulation. These developments are discernible not only through the transformed design of presentation slides following pedagogical interventions but also through the maturation of strategic communication frameworks employed by the students. Initially, the majority of students relied heavily on slides saturated with textual content—predominantly in the form of bullet points—thereby reflecting a conventional, information-dense approach that lacked intentionality in visual composition.

As students advanced through the experiential learning cycle, a marked transition emerged in their visual literacy. By the final stage, over 85% of students incorporated advanced visual components—such as infographics, graphs, icons, and nuanced color palettes—demonstrating a deliberate alignment between visual elements and rhetorical purpose. This evolution is indicative of students' deepened engagement with the principles of multimodal communication, as well as their iterative application of the "active experimentation" phase within Kolb's experiential learning framework. Through recursive cycles of design, peer and instructor feedback, and self-reflection, students redefined the visual narrative structure of their academic discourse.

This transformation extended beyond aesthetic refinement. Students began to align the sequencing of visual content with logical argumentation, paying careful attention to coherence, contrast, and visual hierarchy. A growing number of students demonstrated awareness of layout symmetry, typography effectiveness, and audience cognition in visual processing. These enhancements suggest a pedagogical shift toward intentionality in design thinking and rhetorical precision.

Parallel to visual enhancements, verbal communication also underwent substantial refinement. Analysis of recorded presentations revealed heightened awareness of vocal modulation, including strategic intonation, calculated pauses, articulation clarity, and prosodic variation. Students increasingly employed multimodal resources—such as laser pointers, embedded multimedia, and live demonstrations—to fortify their narrative delivery. In many cases, students adopted storytelling frameworks to scaffold audience engagement and enhance cognitive retention.

Equally pivotal was the integration of peer and instructor feedback, which functioned as a reflective mirror, enabling learners to triangulate their self-assessment with external evaluations. Documented commentary—such as "the progression of your slide logic is now more intuitive" or "your vocal delivery is noticeably more dynamic when discussing complex data"—reinforces the perception that the transformation in presentation competency was observable and appreciable beyond the self. Such reflections not only

facilitated deeper learner introspection but also embedded a feedback literacy culture essential to iterative learning.

By tracing the evolution from preliminary drafts through mid-course revisions to the final presentation output, portfolios emerged not merely as static compilations but as dynamic evidence of intellectual labor and pedagogical engagement. They serve as cognitive artifacts, embodying both the epistemological shifts and skill acquisition trajectories of the learners. Consequently, these findings substantiate the assertion that experiential learning cultivates durable transformation—not only in presentational performance but in the strategic design of academic communication as an evolving praxis.

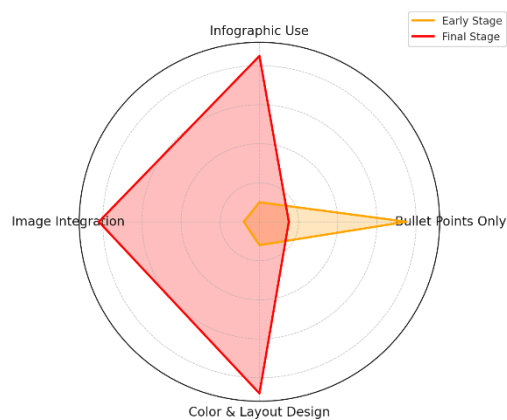


Figure 2. Comparative Analysis of Visual Element Utilization in Student Presentations

The radar chart highlights a notable shift in students' use of visual elements between the early and final stages of their academic presentations. Initially, presentations relied heavily on bullet points, reflecting a text-centered, traditional format.

In contrast, the final stage shows increased use of infographics, imagery, and strategic color and layout, indicating enhanced visual literacy and multimodal awareness. This development suggests a move toward purposeful design, aligning with Kolb's "active experimentation" phase of experiential learning.

Through repeated practice, peer and instructor feedback, and self-reflection, students refined their visual strategies. The radar chart thus represents more than numerical change—it evidences the growth of presentational competence and the role of portfolios as reflective tools in that process.

3.1.3 Comparison of Student Self-Assessments Across Stages

This section analyzes the progression in students' self-perceived presentation competencies, based on structured self-assessment data collected during three key stages: initial, intermediate, and final. The assessment rubric focused on critical indicators of effective presentation, including message clarity, organization, delivery, non-verbal communication, and engagement with the audience.

At the initial stage, most students expressed low confidence and limited strategic awareness. Their self-ratings were largely concentrated in the "Needs Improvement" and "Adequate" ranges, especially regarding delivery fluency and audience interaction. Approximately 68% of students perceived weaknesses in areas such as vocal variation, eye contact, and posture. These early assessments suggest that students lacked internalized frameworks to monitor or plan effective communication.

In the intermediate stage, shifts began to emerge. About 75% of students reported performance in the "Good" or better categories. This improvement corresponded with repeated practice, self-reflection through journaling, and peer feedback. Students described becoming more aware of delivery elements such as intonation and visual engagement, and began integrating strategies to improve coherence and confidence.

By the final stage, 85% of students evaluated themselves as performing at the "Good" to "Excellent" levels. Reflections highlighted increased autonomy in presentation design, attention to non-verbal cues, and adaptive responses to audience feedback. These developments signal the integration of metacognitive insight and experiential learning into students' communicative practices.

To illustrate this progression, a stacked bar chart (Figure 2) presents the distribution of self-assessment scores across the three stages. It depicts a clear transition from low to high performance bands, emphasizing the pedagogical impact of experiential learning cycles.

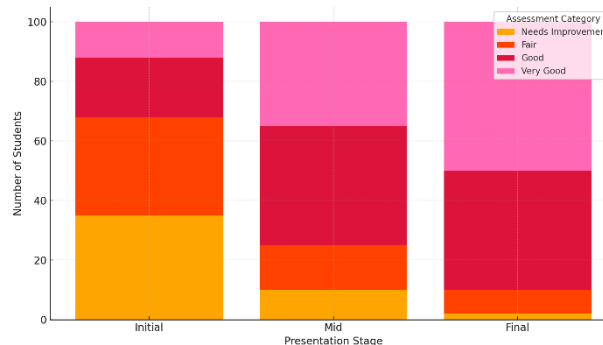


Figure 3. Comparison of Student Self-Assessments Across Three Presentation Stages

The stacked bar chart illustrates how students evaluated their presentation skills across three stages: initial, mid, and final. Assessments fell into four categories—"Needs Improvement," "Fair," "Good," and "Very Good"—capturing shifts in perceived communication abilities. Initially, most students rated themselves as "Needs Improvement" or "Fair," indicating limited confidence and awareness of skill gaps, especially in delivery and audience engagement.

By the mid-stage, more students rated themselves "Good" or "Very Good." This change aligned with repeated practice, self-reflection, and peer feedback, which helped them improve fluency, coherence, and visual engagement. At the final stage, "Very Good" became the dominant rating. Students reported more autonomy, refined non-verbal skills, and responsiveness to audience cues, showing enhanced confidence and communication strategies.

Overall, the data highlights the positive impact of iterative learning and feedback. The evolving self-assessments reflect stronger self-regulation and growing competence in academic presentations.

3.1.4 Students' Perceptions of the Learning Experience

Insights derived from semi-structured interviews substantiated and enriched the patterns identified in reflective journals and self-assessment rubrics, revealing a complex interplay between affective involvement and cognitive maturation within the experiential learning framework. Students overwhelmingly characterized their engagement as simultaneously demanding and illuminating, underscoring the multidimensional influence of experiential pedagogy on their academic formation.

Of the 32 students interviewed, 29 articulated that iterative presentation practice and formative peer feedback notably improved their preparedness for authentic communication contexts. One student reflected:

"Criticism from peers is sometimes easier to accept because it feels like help, not judgment. That made me more confident to try again." (M9)

This observation highlights the role of peer evaluation as a mediating factor in emotional regulation and learner resilience. Constructive peer interaction not only demystified critique but also normalized revision as an integral component of communicative competence.

Another student emphasized:

"I became more aware of how I speak and construct arguments because I knew I would be evaluated by my peers, not just the lecturer." (M14)

This statement suggests a heightened sense of metacognitive responsibility and self-monitoring catalyzed by the horizontal nature of peer assessment. As students anticipated reciprocal scrutiny, they internalized performance standards and critically examined their rhetorical strategies.

Several participants cited peer feedback as the most impactful dimension of the course, pointing to its immediacy and relatability. Others proposed that longer rehearsal phases would improve fluency and intentionality. These insights indicate that experiential learning fosters iterative growth, both affectively and behaviorally, by embedding formative opportunities within the pedagogical cycle.

"Practice time felt too short to retry and improve, even though the input from lecturers and peers was really helpful." (M21)

The call for extended rehearsal underscores students' recognition of rehearsal as not merely preparatory but fundamentally developmental. It signals the emergence of students' agency in shaping their learning trajectory.

Notably, students reported a paradigm shift in their conception of academic presentation—from a performative task to a nuanced communicative process. This

reconceptualization aligns with contemporary rhetorical pedagogy, emphasizing strategic, audience-responsive, and reflective engagement.

"I used to think presentations were just about talking in front of the class, but now I realize it's about building a connection with the audience." (M30)

Such realizations suggest that experiential learning cultivates epistemological change, prompting learners to reassess foundational beliefs about knowledge dissemination and audience interaction.

Moreover, students' consistent emphasis on growth through repetition, feedback, and reflection indicates a progressive internalization of communication as an evolving skill set rather than a static performance. The dialogic interplay among experience, peer discourse, and self-assessment underpins a transformative learning process.

Collectively, these accounts affirm that experiential learning engenders metacognitive development, supports emotional resilience, and equips students with transferable communicative competencies essential for academic and professional domains. The findings exemplify how pedagogical design grounded in authentic engagement can scaffold learners' progression from novice presenters to intentional and adaptive academic communicators.

3.1.5 Empirical Evidence from Classroom-Based Behavioral Observation

To augment the final-stage classroom observation analysis, the figure below illustrates the average student scores across five core behavioral dimensions of academic presentation performance: active engagement, audience interaction, responsiveness to feedback, non-verbal expressiveness, and technical readiness.

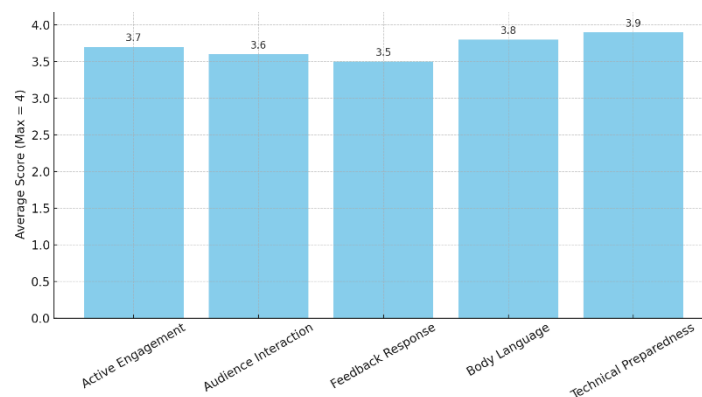


Figure 4. Mean Observation Scores of Students (Final Stage)

This visual representation provides a comprehensive view of the substantial improvements observed in students' presentation behaviors. Across all five assessed domains, students demonstrated clear progress, with mean scores approaching the rubric's maximum value of 4. This pattern of development reinforces the pedagogical value of experiential learning interventions and their capacity to instill both behavioral and cognitive competencies essential for effective academic communication.

The observational component plays a vital role in the triangulation of data, functioning as an empirical bridge between qualitative insights drawn from reflective journals, self-assessments, and semi-structured interviews. These classroom-based observations not only validate students' self-reported growth but also uncover changes in behavior that may not be fully articulated through introspection alone. Early-stage observations revealed that a significant proportion of students displayed minimal physical engagement, limited responsiveness to audience cues, and insufficient use of visual contact and expressive gestures. Non-verbal behaviors were often underdeveloped, and presentations lacked adaptive responsiveness.

By the final observation, however, most students had undergone a marked transformation. The increase in spontaneous interaction with audiences, more deliberate use of vocal modulation, and refined posture signaled a deeper internalization of presentation principles. Notably, while only 6 out of 32 students maintained consistent eye contact and demonstrated controlled posture in the initial stages, this number rose dramatically to 27 by the conclusion of the intervention. Similarly, time management skills improved significantly, with 88% of students delivering their presentations within the allocated time, compared to a mere 35% earlier. These developments suggest the successful integration of technical and affective presentation strategies facilitated by iterative experiential learning cycles.

The observed behavioral shifts align strongly with Kolb's experiential learning cycle, particularly the phases of active experimentation and concrete experience. Students were not only rehearsing but actively implementing feedback and adjusting their behavior in real time, reflecting a higher level of metacognitive awareness. Observable enhancements in body language, facial expression, and pacing were not isolated improvements, but parts of an evolving strategy rooted in reflective refinement and audience-centered delivery.

These findings also reinforce developmental patterns noted in students' reflective narratives and interview transcripts. Many students who initially exhibited anxiety and mechanical delivery gradually adopted more audience-oriented approaches, often using humor, rhetorical questions, and storytelling techniques to engage listeners. The correlation between self-reported learning gains and objectively measured behavioral change strengthens the validity of the overall instructional model.

In conclusion, classroom-based observational data not only affirms the transformative effect of experiential learning on presentation delivery but also confirms that such transformations manifest consistently across affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains. The convergence of visual, verbal, and interactive competencies observed in final-stage behaviors exemplifies a holistic evolution toward professional-grade communication skills. This evidence supports the integration of structured experiential components in future academic curricula aimed at cultivating reflective and responsive presenters.

3.2 Discussion

This study was designed to investigate how experiential learning (EL) frameworks reconfigure and enhance academic presentation strategies among university-level students. Drawing from an extensive corpus of empirical data—including reflective journals,

longitudinal portfolios, self-assessment rubrics, ethnographic classroom observations, and in-depth semi-structured interviews—the findings reveal profound transformations in behavioral performance, cognitive orientation, and epistemological engagement. This section delineates these findings in relation to the central research questions, theoretical underpinnings, and current scholarly discourse in the field of education and communication studies.

3.2.5 Transformation of Academic Presentation Strategies

The primary research objective focused on assessing the degree to which experiential learning methodologies foster improvements in academic presentation competencies. The data unequivocally demonstrates a progressive enhancement in students' rhetorical delivery, strategic preparation, and overall self-efficacy in presenting complex content. Students transitioned from formulaic, performance-anxious presenters to confident communicators who utilized diverse rhetorical and visual tools. Through the structured application of Kolb's experiential cycle—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—students incrementally developed strategic awareness and multimodal fluency. These included deliberate control over vocal inflection, purposeful use of body language, tailored slide design, and audience-centered content structuring.

The qualitative shift was particularly evident in their portfolios and reflective journals, which captured evolving approaches toward planning, rehearsing, and executing presentations. The incorporation of narrative frameworks, transitions, and multimodal aids indicated not only an improved skill set but also deeper conceptual understanding. This aligns with pedagogical theories suggesting that experiential learning acts as both a cognitive scaffold and a performative rehearsal space, transforming passive learners into reflective practitioners. The results thus substantiate the working hypothesis that EL cultivates not merely procedural competence but metacognitive agility and adaptive communicative practice.

3.2.6 Emergence of Metacognitive Awareness

The reflective journal analysis revealed a salient trajectory of cognitive development. In initial entries, students articulated emotional discomfort, highlighting anxiety, performance fear, and a lack of structural clarity. These reflections were generally descriptive, confirming Radović et al. (2021)'s assessment of surface-level engagement in traditional pedagogies. However, with iterative cycles of experience and structured reflection, students began to articulate more complex evaluations of their rhetorical techniques, audience interaction strategies, and narrative coherence. This transformation mirrors the shift from lower-order thinking to higher-order metacognitive reflection emphasized in O'Flynn et al. (2023).

Peer feedback was instrumental in this evolution. Students reported that peer evaluations served both emotional reassurance and analytical stimulus, fostering self-regulated learning in a low-stakes environment. These interactions enabled learners to calibrate their strategies, revise their delivery, and contextualize feedback within their developmental arc. Kingkaew et al. (2023) emphasize this dual affective-cognitive function of peer interaction, which was clearly evidenced in the present data set.

The portfolios showed marked transformation in the use of visual and verbal elements. Initial presentation slides were often text-heavy and linear; by the final stages, students deployed more sophisticated visual grammar—integrating data visualizations, schematic diagrams, and purposeful color contrasts to enhance narrative flow and comprehension. This evolution points to increased visual literacy and aligns with Kolb's "active experimentation" phase.

Observational data further validated these self-reported changes. By the end of the instructional cycle, classroom observers noted significant improvements in students' use of posture, gestural modulation, eye contact, and improvisational responsiveness. These behavioral indicators provide strong external confirmation that EL methodologies effectively translated cognitive gains into observable performance improvements.

3.2.7 Integration with Established Knowledge

The study's findings strongly converge with existing literature affirming the pedagogical efficacy of EL. The results reaffirm that reflective and participatory learning environments, as advocated by Hayden & McIntosh (2018) and Yang et al. (2021), substantively bolster communication skills and learner autonomy. Our Southeast Asian university setting extends the generalizability of these findings to diverse educational and cultural contexts.

This study also contributes to the discourse on self-regulation and learner agency. Bhati and Song (2019) argue for the centrality of narrative construction and reflective writing in building learner autonomy—a position echoed in the students' evolving use of reflective journals and self-assessment tools. These artifacts functioned as dynamic learning spaces, where students not only documented experiences but also curated and revised their communicative strategies.

Peer critique, as emphasized by Salinas-Navarro et al. (2024) and Pye & Fledderjohann (2023), emerged as a key driver of epistemic growth. Students transitioned from reliance on instructor validation to a collaborative, peer-informed model of skill acquisition and refinement. These results suggest that feedback literacy—defined as the capacity to interpret, act upon, and internalize feedback—is a core competency nurtured through EL-based instruction.

3.2.8 Theoretical Contributions and Implications

While affirming Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), the findings suggest nuanced departures and areas for theoretical refinement. Contrary to the linear model proposed by Kolb, students appeared to move recursively across stages, often revisiting reflective observation and abstract conceptualization throughout the presentation cycle. This iterative process points to the necessity of a revised ELT framework that accommodates nonlinear, recursive, and context-sensitive learning behaviors.

Furthermore, this study offers empirical support for critiques of ELT that highlight its limited attention to affective dimensions (Wright et al., 2018). Emotional regulation was not merely an incidental outcome but a central mechanism by which students achieved higher-order cognitive and behavioral gains. The data underscore the pedagogical value of

cultivating psychologically safe learning environments where affective engagement becomes a conduit for metacognitive development.

Additionally, the findings resonate with inclusive pedagogy principles (Djonko-Moore & Joseph, 2016), particularly in the use of multimodal instruction that respects diverse learner needs and expression styles. Digital adaptations of EL also proved instrumental, suggesting that technology-enhanced experiential learning can democratize access and personalize the learning process.

The findings articulate a comprehensive portrait of how experiential learning reconfigures presentation pedagogy. Far from being an ancillary instructional strategy, EL should be understood as a foundational paradigm capable of meeting the affective, cognitive, and performative demands of contemporary higher education. These findings call for a reimagining of communication instruction, wherein experiential, reflective, and collaborative dimensions are seamlessly integrated into curricular design and delivery.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the pedagogical impact of experiential learning on students' academic presentation competencies within a higher education context. Drawing on Kolb's experiential learning cycle and the mARC framework, the research revealed that iterative practice, reflective journaling, and peer feedback contributed significantly to improvements in students' rhetorical skills, multimodal literacy, and metacognitive awareness. Evidence from portfolios, interviews, and classroom observations showed a shift from passive content delivery toward audience-responsive, strategically constructed presentations.

For scholars and practitioners, this study reinforces the pedagogical value of embedding experiential learning structurally within communication-focused curricula. The use of authentic tasks, supported by collaborative and reflective mechanisms, appears to foster deeper learning and transferable skills. More experienced researchers might extend this work by applying similar frameworks in varied disciplines or educational systems to assess scalability and cross-contextual relevance.

However, the study presents several important limitations. Its scope was limited to a single course in one institution, thus narrowing its generalizability. While qualitative rigor was maintained, the absence of a control group prevents definitive causal claims. Moreover, the dual role of the researchers as instructors may have introduced bias despite reflexivity protocols. Self-reported data such as journals and interviews, though rich in insight, pose concerns about social desirability and response authenticity.

These limitations point to methodological and validity-related constraints. Future research should consider longitudinal and multi-institutional studies using mixed-method or quasi-experimental designs to enhance external validity and causal inference. Despite these challenges, the study provides a practical and conceptual contribution to communication pedagogy by demonstrating that experiential learning is not merely supplementary, but foundational to cultivating adaptive, reflective, and confident presenters.

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