Enhancing Business Presentations with Technology
by Linguarama 10. April 2012 06:10

Many Business English language learners need to give presentations for work and professional purposes. This blog post looks at some of the techniques and technologies they can use.

Love it or hate it, PowerPoint has been around for over 25 years. The term 'Death by PowerPoint' refers to those endless presentations where the speaker reads through bullet points, or uses the distracting 'bells and whistles' of sound and visual effects. But should we really blame the technology for poor presenting skills?

Two Japanese architects created a new approach to giving effective presentations designed to keep talks concise. It's called Pecha Kucha. Check Wikipedia to find out how to pronounce it. Each presenter has 20 slides which change automatically according to a timer. The timer is set to allow 20 seconds per slide, making all presentations mercifully short at 6 minutes and 40 seconds exactly.

The results can be truly memorable, as the preparation is far more focussed. Presenters are forced to think more about impactful visuals and using 'key words' only, rather than filling the screen with a mass of text. Do you dare try giving a Pecha Kucha?

Prezi is an impressive tool which allows you to break away from the traditional pre-set sequence of your slides. You can zoom in spectacularly on any piece of information within the presentation, whether it is a picture or piece of text. Using PowerPoint encourages us to think in a linear way; with a Prezi, you can jump straight to something as it becomes relevant. That makes it easy to respond to the audience.

The last presenter I saw hooked up his iPad2 to the projector. By using a navigation pane on the left of the screen, he could swipe through his whole presentation and then simply tap to go instantly to the relevant slide.
Even though I like using the technology, memorable presentations draw a lot upon rhetorical skills. The 'tools' can help, but great presenters need confidence, and charisma. That's why so many of the talks you can view at TED.com are impactful and memorable.

That's why Business English students, and learners giving a presentation in their second language, value learning the skills of giving a great presentation. And many of those who are serious about improving their skills take the Linguarama ‘English for Presentations’ course – an intensive 5 day programme designed to help make a significant improvement in Presentations skills.

Oh yes, and the technology can help, too!