

Reflective Essay



MODULE NAME:	ACADEMIC SKILLS FOR THE DIGITAL ERA BMSW4013
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Introduction

Learning from and growing from personal experiences is crucial, particularly when learning new skills or venturing beyond of one's comfort zone. Since it was my first time giving a presentation in front of a class, this essay centers on my experience giving a PowerPoint presentation about Marie Curie, which was a noteworthy milestone. Using the framework of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988), I will assess my performance and pinpoint areas that require improvement.

By breaking down the process into six steps—description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan—Gibbs' model offers an organized method for reflecting on experiences. Every step promotes more in-depth reflection and offers perspectives on how the event affected me and how I might get better in the future. This method works especially well for honing abilities like public speaking, which can be intimidating yet is necessary for success in school and the workplace. I want to better comprehend my progress, examine the difficulties I encountered, and develop a plan for future development by thinking back on this experience.

Description of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle:

I had to make and present a PowerPoint presentation about a successful individual of my choosing as part of a class assignment. I chose Marie Curie because of her revolutionary scientific discoveries and her tenacity in breaking down social barriers as a female scientist.

A lot of research, thoughtful slide design, and delivery practice were all part of the preparation for the presentation. To make sure I could talk about Curie's life and contributions with assurance and clarity, I practiced several times. Even with this preparation, when the presentation day drew near, I was overcome with anxiety.

I found it difficult to control my nervousness when I stood in front of the class. I spoke quickly because I wanted to finish the presentation as soon as possible. Due to my haste, I neglected to highlight a few points I had intended to make, especially those pertaining to Curie's Nobel Prizes and the influence of her work on contemporary medicine. I also observed that my nervousness made me extremely stiff; instead of moving naturally around the classroom, I stayed in one place. My delivery was perhaps less dynamic and interesting because of this lack of movement.

There was another problem with my last slide. The audience found it challenging to read the text because of a few lines that were improperly structured. This issue may have lessened the presentation's overall impact and diverted attention from the significance of my conclusion.

My ability to keep eye contact with the audience, however, was one element of my

delivery that caught me off guard. I felt a sense of connection when I saw classmates nodding and paying attention, which helped me unwind a little. Despite the difficulties I encountered, this engagement enhanced the experience's rewards.

Feelings

I had a range of emotions prior to, during, and following the presentation, including nervousness, self-doubt, and finally relief. I was really nervous before the presentation. My anxiety was exacerbated by the constant fear that I would forget my stuff or make a mistake.

My hands were shaking, my heart was pounding, and my voice was wavering a little during the presentation, all of which were physical manifestations of my anxiousness. It was challenging to give my message my whole attention because of these feelings. Furthermore, I was so preoccupied with finishing the content that I neglected to move organically or interact with my surroundings. Movement and efficient use of the classroom area can help maintain audience engagement and project confidence, as stressed by *Presentation Skills for Students* (Van Emden & Becker, 2022).

After the presentation, I felt even more disappointed because of the problem with the final slide. I was annoyed that I had forgotten to include this crucial information in my preparation. This omission made it clear how crucial it is to carefully go over every part of a presentation, particularly those that have a direct bearing on the audience's comprehension.

Despite these difficulties, I felt proud of myself for finishing the assignment. For me, public speaking was a big challenge. Although I didn't give a flawless presentation, the experience taught me important lessons for future development.

After giving my presentation some thought, I saw both its advantages and disadvantages.

What Worked Well:

Making eye contact with my audience was a big strength of mine since it helped me engage them. According to Van Emden and Becker (2022), keeping eye contact with the audience helps build rapport, which can increase audience engagement and presenter confidence.

Preparation: I used pertinent graphics and succinct text to create visually appealing and well-structured PowerPoint slides. According to McMillan (2021), successful communication of complicated knowledge requires the use of clear visual aids.

Selection of Content: An interesting and thought-provoking presentation topic that

connected with the audience was produced by selecting an inspirational person like Marie Curie.

My challenges:

Time management: Because I talked too rapidly, I was unable to fully explain everything and missed some crucial aspects. According to Cottrell (2023), efficient time management is essential for giving a comprehensive and captivating presentation.

Body Language and Movement: My presentation seemed frozen since I didn't move naturally. According to Van Emden and Becker (2022), maintaining the audience's interest and projecting confidence can be achieved by moving with purpose and ease.

Nerves: My performance was significantly impacted by my anxiousness, which made it challenging to maintain focus and present my material as intended.

Slide Readability: Clear communication was hampered by the final slide's formatting problem. This error lessened my conclusion's power and served as a reminder of how crucial careful attention to detail is.

Examination

This event gave me a number of insightful realizations regarding public speaking and my own growth.

The significance of nerve management is one important lesson. Prior to speaking events, adopting relaxation techniques like deep breathing and visualization might assist lower anxiety, as suggested by Cottrell (2019) in *The Study Skills Handbook*. Furthermore, practicing in front of friends or classmates can boost self-esteem and lessen feelings of loneliness when giving the presentation.

Another realization is how important movement and other nonverbal cues are to giving a successful presentation. According to Mehrabian's Communication Model, body language and movement are important nonverbal clues that influence how a message is understood. My presentation felt less dynamic because I stayed in one place, which might have had an impact on the audience's level of engagement. In the future, I want to be able to walk freely throughout the classroom, highlighting important ideas and fostering a more engaging environment. These movements will feel more natural throughout the presentation if they are practiced during rehearsals.

I learned a valuable lesson about the significance of thoroughly going over all visual aids prior to presenting from the problem with the final slide. According to McMillan (2021), in order to keep the audience's attention, slides should be clear and easy to read. I intend to test the presentation on a larger screen, carefully go over each slide for formatting mistakes, and solicit peer input during rehearsals in the future. I can make sure my slides are professional and understandable by following these procedures.

Lastly, this experience showed me how important it is to push myself outside my comfort zone. Despite my initial fear of public speaking, it forced me to acquire abilities that will help me in both academic and professional settings. Overcoming these obstacles will help me achieve my larger objectives of improving my communication skills and confidence.

Conclusion

Thinking back on my Marie Curie presentation has been a really beneficial exercise for developing my skills and self-awareness. Although my performance was originally hampered by my anxiousness, I later found that my preparation and ability to make eye contact with my audience were positives. Simultaneously, I recognized areas that required development, like time management, body language enhancement, including natural movement, handling anxiousness, and making sure my presentations were clear.

I've learned from this reflection that public speaking involves more than just sharing information; it also involves establishing a rapport with the audience and projecting confidence. These abilities complement my long-term objectives of good communication and are critical for academic achievement. I can keep getting better and give presentations in the future with more assurance if I work on my weaknesses and overcome my obstacles.

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ACTION PLAN

Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time Bound
Improve Time Management During Presentations: practice pacing my delivery by timing myself during rehearsals.	Aim to stay within the allocated time, leaving space for questions.	Record three practice sessions and adjust content based on timing.	Clear pacing ensures thorough coverage of key points.	Achieve consistent timing in my next presentation.
Enhance Awareness of Body Language: focus on open gestures, posture, and facial expressions during presentations.	Receive peer feedback on body language after each practice session.	Watch recordings of my presentations and identify areas for improvement.	Confident body language improves audience engagement.	Implement these changes by the next presentation.
Reduce Anxiety When Presenting: use breathing exercises and positive visualization before speaking.	Track how relaxed I feel on a scale of 1-10 before and after presentations.	Practice relaxation techniques three times a week.	Managing anxiety enhances focus and delivery.	Build these habits over the next three weeks.

Build Confidence in Public Speaking: volunteer for small speaking opportunities in class or group settings.	Track the number of speaking opportunities I participate in each month.	Start with brief contributions and gradually increase participation.	Confidence in public speaking supports academic and career success.	Increase my confidence level by the end of the term.
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