

Easing Science Students Into Poster Presentations

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Background: Graduate students in a required course (1st sem.) for communications skills at scientific conferences have no research data, but they may need to present posters soon. With no English courses in the previous 2+ years, they need to slowly and methodically develop the means to create scientific posters and get used to speaking about data.

Lesson 1: Provide a mock poster template on A3 paper (Fig. 1). Students choose a favorite hobby as the topic. They have 10 minutes to write a title and draw 2 pictures to fill the inserted boxes. Rotate visitors for 2-3 minutes each to give speaking practice.

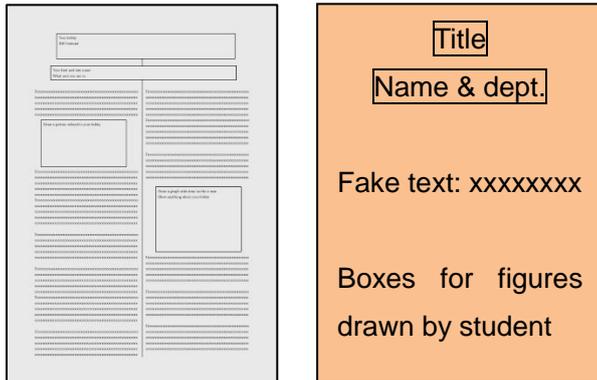


Figure 1. Mock poster template

Lesson 2: Students make a pecha kucha presentation on the same hobby and deliver it on their laptops to pairs of students. Audience asks questions and gives feedback on presentation style.

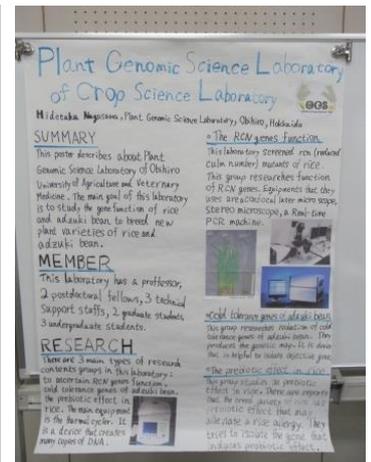


Lesson 3: Compare posters to Powerpoint presentations. Learn about good & bad poster formats. Learn grammar for describing objects simply. Photograph a real poster from departmental displays and rate it for its merits and demerits.

Lesson 4: Weekly “lab news chats” help to build language skills to explain technical vocabulary. Teacher monitors like eikaiwa discussions and offers feedback on common weak points.

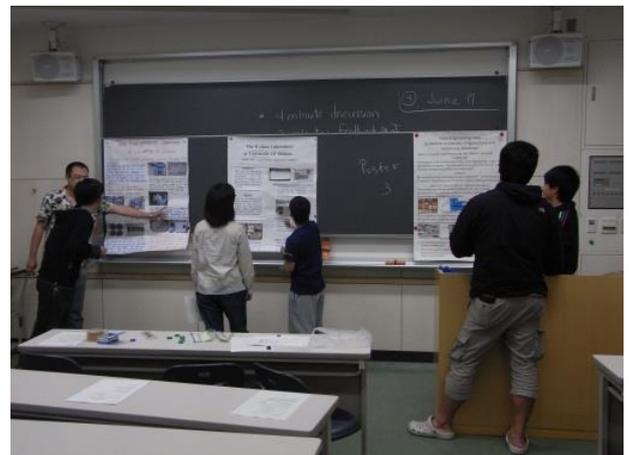


Example poster
(A4, MS Word)



Actual student poster
(A1, handmade)

Lesson 5: Due to lack of research data, students create a full-size poster by hand to describe all activities in their department. Images, techniques, tools, and results are explained in simple English for visitors with different majors. Peers rate poster design and speaker anonymously. The teacher photographs each poster and provides design feedback. Feedback survey shows presenter’s awareness of ability to explain science & to compare designs with peers.



Presenting posters in class
Half of class presents, then rotates.
Visitors write feedback (center table).